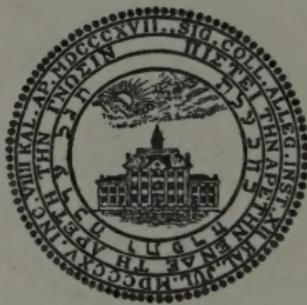


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WITHDRAWN

I SAW IT MYSELF

HENRI BARBUSSE

has also written

UNDER FIRE

LIGHT (CLARTÉ)

WE OTHERS

Published by E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.

I SAW IT MYSELF

BY

HENRI BARBUSSE

AUTHOR OF "UNDER FIRE," "LIGHT," ETC.

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TRANSLATED BY

BRIAN RHYS



NEW YORK

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FIRST EDITION

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DEDICATION

DEO IGNOTO

Here the reader will only find what has actually happened. Invention plays no part in these stories; their substance, and even their form, I have taken from scenes that I have witnessed myself, or else gathered from trustworthy source. I have done little or no 'romancing,' to use a current expression. Sometimes, I have given the crude facts quite plainly; in other cases, I have discreetly covered over details in a thin veil of fiction. I have scarcely ever changed men's names into actors' names.

My hope is that these casual jottings, picked up here and there in our appalling present-day civilisation, may accustom a few readers to the strangeness of truth, and open the eyes of a public opinion lulled by childish legends to the true picture of our XXth Century—a century that may be described as the Age of Gold, of Steel, or of the Jazz Band, but above all, as the Age of Blood!

Further, I trust that they will kindle some spark of angry hatred against those who are answerable

(their truly proper names, if one may so speak, are familiar enough); and above all, against the régime which deliberately grinds men underfoot and gives rise to so many horrors in the sight of heaven.

It will be said that these are exceptional doings. That is a serious statement to make. I envy those who go so far as to repeat it readily and clear themselves by a mere phrase before the court of their conscience.

The statement cannot be justified; it is a scandalous travesty of the truth. But even if it were true, such exceptions should only be the more vehemently denounced. For whether they are few and far between or whether they are representative, these woes and crimes are imposed, not by Destiny, but by Man. They are episodes in the world-wide struggle between the tortured and the torturers. They reveal only too clearly the glaring structural defects in the social fabric reared by the torturers, point out only too plainly what steps we must take before we can see the last of them. It is for us to consign to the past this perpetually recurrent cycle of man-made calamities. And until that day, let there be no craven excuses. Let me repeat what I have just written in this connection in *Traitors to Jesus*: 'Wholeheartedly we loathe the concessions of those who trade in optimism. 'All is not suffering,' they say; 'Life has its pleasant side too; it gives us grand things and fine moments. Life, then,

cannot be too badly devised.' To this, the reply must be, 'Can we avoid some part of the suffering that exists? If Life brings sufferings that are avoidable, then it is not well devised.'"

Exceptional facts, indeed! Why, it is the very opposite that we must proclaim. For if we want to give these few examples their full weight and significance, we must multiply each one, in some cases not tenfold, but a thousandfold. There is far more cruelty and plundering in this great world of ours than mediocre public intelligence can reckon. Far more murderers, too, though we only point out the most honored and renowned. The barbarity which falls from high places is both present and active, everywhere. But the facts have a trick of vanishing, because they are forgotten or have never come to light; most crimes are stifled in the memory. Only now and then, circumstances combine to set before us the living picture of some 'exceptional fact.' We cannot know everything, is our despairing cry, and our minds are maddeningly alive to the things we shall never know.

The ancients dedicated their works and deeds To the Unknown God—*Deo Ignoto*. I do not believe in God, but I believe alas! in the Unknown. This book I dedicate to the unknown afflicted, to that great multitude unknown in life and death, to the infinite affinity of the unknown, to those martyrs whose memory is utterly blotted out, who lie in

destruction and oblivion underground, to that multitudinous host that eyes may see but have not seen.

This I do under the ægis of Justice, of that active and scientific law which embraces all here below. For soon or late, man's destiny upon earth must find its own adjustments, and at last we shall hear the sound as yet unheard, of marching feet that we sent on their way.

H. B.

PART I
THE WAR

THE WAR

SONG OF A SOLDIER

“No, I never had any luck,” the poor soldier explained to the pretty girl.

One look at him told you as much. Long dealings with misfortune had made him shrink in upon himself, had thrust his eyes back in their sockets, clipped all his movements, like wings. His eyes—little points, dead black, dabbed in anyhow by a clumsy painter high up in the dismal oval of a swarthy face—his eyes gave the only touch of light in that dulled portrait. It was hard to say which had faded the most: the cloth of his great-coat, or the skin on his face. A sorry soldier! One would have said that a child’s hands had built him, out of colourless and ill-assembled discs, and pyramids, and cubes.

“Some people are born to fail!” Those were the last words he had ever heard from his mother; they were all she could find to give him, as she lay on her deathbed, one eye already closed.

Nothing ever came to anything, when he put his hand to it. Day in, season out, he messed his work.

He had lost the little that his parents had not lost before him. All his plans went awry, like the general plan of his body; they were crooked constructions, and soon toppled down. Remote he lived and shy, in a hard shell of silence. Women never noticed him; only one or two were charitable enough to laugh at his expense. As for men—they always looked through him at something else. It was as if the sun was going down upon him.

This stranger to human happiness had gone, of course, to the war,—gone, likewise ingloriously. Not like the others, with the jovial, alcoholic crowd; he had left his village alone, one night, just to fill up a gap, untrumpeted, undrummed, unreal as if he lived in the pages of some poor story.

In the slow column he marched unobserved, of all soldiers, the most obscure. Once, indeed, he had bravely rescued some comrades from death, but the exploit passed unnoticed like all that he did. Still, he had escaped hostile bullets and court-martial, too.

And now he was back on leave from the land of human sacrifice, for six good days, anyhow.

It happened, during this little interval of time, that the face of things changed, and all through the choice of the gentle-hearted Clara. Oh! a mere turn in the wheels of chance, partly to be explained by a disappointment that had come to her, partly by the

emptiness of a countryside stripped bare of young men, partly too—why not?—by sunshine, and youth. And so, down the sunny green paths, she walked like some vision held in leash, chin pointed modestly down, by the side of this tall and dingy-hued soldier.

When he set off for the front once more, when the last hand-shake had left the girl behind, and he stood alone in the chill of the twilight's gloom, his face shone out like a flame, and his heart was warmed for many days to come, perhaps for ever.

Aloud he laughed, drunk but not with wine, exclaiming: "It's funny the way things change!" To think of this glorious return, six days—seven, say—after coming home dead beat, dog tired! He was the first, now, to laugh at his former self; he smiled to think of the incredible rain of blows that had poured down upon the creature that he had been.

All night through, then all through the day, this forgotten victim of ill-fortune travelled on, to reach his sector. The endless annoyances of the journey never robbed him of his one, his radiant thought. It came back and back to him, as one remembers one's own name. Crammed into railway trucks, or tucked away, patient and quiet as a parcel, in the corner of some waiting-room, even then he and his pipe were lost in that same thought, while the smoke went curling round his little head,

as round a kitchen pot. Distance lent enchantment to his memories. Hour after hour, Clara grew up in his mind, more and more divine, more human, more adorable, more tangible, more and more clearly Clara.

He got down at last, on a platform wetted with rain like some harbour quay, and stepped out on the march, quivering for joy, full of swift lights and clarion calls, gay at heart as a cock. To all he lent radiance, and first to the great sweep of the evening sky; there, on the threshold of night, holder of secrets, he even began to understand, to feel the love of other men.

The boundaries of habitable regions were close at hand. The world had become mournful and dark, full of evil signs. He threaded his way past great flat planes, rectangular outlines—the huge ammunition dump, grimed over by the greying light, a city of towering piles: red shells, yellow shells, black torpedoes, poured out there in a stream by lines of lorries, thundering in from the West through hours unlit by sun or moon. And acres and acres underground were also crammed with the living death.

A little farther on, a monster cannon, solitary specimen of his type, was staring fixedly out of an eyeless socket at one far point, out over the back of visible space.

This sight offended the soldier who had found

happiness for the first time in life, but he soon regained his spirits.

Then came a weird city—the supply services behind the lines. Rows and streets, open squares—all barracks. Offices, quartermasters' shops, clothing stores, where thousands and thousands of new uniforms, folded and pressed in sheaves, were piled up in the gloom; ambulances, built low and very wide, like coffins for whole armies; then the military cemetery, with its skeleton forest, cross-shaped. An endless coming and going, grumblings, swearings, rattlings of cart and lorry wheels; patrols. . . . No doubt about it, there was something afoot; attack was in the air; you could smell it coming. But the man who went his pigmy way through all these things was firmly established in his joy; nothing, now, could shake his heart.

And already he was on his way through what was left of a village, a plaster-strewn jumble, shattered in dust. Here and there among the plots and gaping house-cells were gardens painted white with flecks from the walls. The church, with cross cut short at the base, had been turned into a dressing-station; on its body, cut out in the living flesh, a cross, blood-red.

Flash and boom! An intensive bombardment in the distance and all around. On a height overhead, running out there like a promontory above the shaking ground beneath the flaming sky, staff-

officers stood. They had come to see the batteries at work, harassing the enemy, combing them through, circling them in.

One of them said, "That's grand!"

Another said, "It will be grander yet, soon!"

Then they went off back to the rear, to their quarters.

The soldier home from leave, now returning into the monstrous chaos of the world of war, felt the menace growing, above and around him. Yet everything fell away before the strength of that love which he cherished within him, and the ugliness of things was entirely blotted out. Even he stepped out briskly, as if he were in haste, and began to hum a song.

Stepping lightly, he passed along a road that bristled with trees, shattered and whittled down. At this spot, something which reminded him, rather too sharply, of a corner of his own village—a bit of wall, aged in a few seconds by a sudden squall, and the half of a doorway—forced him to sing out louder in the darkening light.

A soldier who lived there, in a cellar, seeing him march so gaily by, humming a tune, and now and then waving a hand, mistook his condition and thought well to give him a warning; "Mind the step, you poor blighter. Don't you bust your fag'older."

He crossed the recoil trenches, really lovely

trenches, looking quite new and nicely patted down. They were full of Senegalese, with fierce, laughing expressions, and gendarmes—those professional soldiers who did less fighting than any other class of citizen passed for active service during the War. These martial-looking fellows were there to block the road to the rear for the fighting troops, to prevent leakage of man-power. The trenches were known as recoil trenches, but the description was not meant to be taken seriously.

But lest this should not be known, a negro began laughing when the returning soldier strode across the teeming trench. A necklace of teeth sprang into shining prominence, and the negro jabbed at the air with his bayonet, and pointed forward, saying, "French soldiers!"

Our man could not restrain a grimace while crossing this loathsome line, then, clear of it, listened inwardly for a moment, relaxed his frown, brightened up, sang aloud once more.

A little further on, the real trenches lay—one long burrow, with those comfortable gendarmes and miserably domesticated niggers lying in wait, at the mouth of the hole. To go down into that never-ending pit is to plunge into sudden twilight smelling thickly of earth; to feel cut off from the world, and close to the terrible heart of things. Round bend after bend, scraping twin walls, you go, a prisoner held lengthwise, framed in by the formless,

outlines of earth, and the breath buffeted out of your body by the thrust of the walls.

Finding himself alone in this infernal channel, the singer sang on, more loudly than ever.

But now hell was let loose over the plains. Reverberations and flashes increased tenfold. Rockets challenged the eyes to right and to left as they hissed upwards to hang green and red chandeliers in the air. In a tumble-down length of trench, which the repairing parties had not sandbagged for days, the parapet was so eaten away that one's head seemed on a level with the edge of the world, and the sky seemed aswarm with brilliance and light, streaming headlong downwards.

Further on, at a round meeting-point in the trenches, where the parapet was flattened out, a tree, standing out, was suddenly blasted; close at hand, came the shell's terrific iron thresh; you saw the flash, like a clenched hand, shaking, smashing, rending.

In this uproarious din, to counter all the noise, the singer—pipe in teeth—sang out loud.

On and on he sang as he climbed up-hill, down-dale on the mountainous plain now before him. Sometimes, for a few seconds, broad daylight seemed to hang in the night sky. At times, one would have thought that all the stars in heaven were exploding. Out on the plains, the eye picked out points where lights fell to earth like clustering

constellations, shell-holes which were the nests of fallen men.

Yet though these fitful dawns shot light into his very soul, though the guns' metallic clang vibrated through him, even so he was happy, and happier still, to think of Clara.

Night was thick when he reached the subterranean dwellings, where his unit lodged, among ashen paths of silence. Threading maze after maze, he came at last to the lairs of his own company.

"You're just in the nick for the fatigue party," said the N. C. O., by way of welcome; he was short of a man. "Take a spade, and—hey there, look alive! Look as though you're a bit squiffy. We'll soon stop that."

Somewhat abashed, the soldier who had only drunk of happiness stopped his song. But he couldn't stop when he wanted to. What is, is, and there's no saying no to it. Happiness coursed on through his veins and the song which, ever since he started out, had been as much part of him as his own soul, still sounded from his throat.

The little band of diggers were now busy with soft black things, stretched out under cold black things, and once again, he began to hum, like a purring cat before the fire.

"Can't he shut his gob, that stinking son of a bitch!" said the N. C. O.

But the greater the distance from Clara, the

more she seemed to move him, to pluck at his heart, the more wonderful the good times they had had together. Lightly he strode over the black and rugged morsels of the night. Radiance poured down from the falling stars. It was one vast celebration, a firework display, in honour of the overpowering change in his fortunes. What was there to hold him back? Life never seemed quite so good. His song throbbed forth again, low at first, then loud.

“Stow it!” growled his comrades, under their breath.

The soldier within him, trained to night work, told him that there was no danger imminent; the front lines were still a good way off; moreover the officer was still commanding the detachment in person and he always stopped doing so at a given moment. And then again, as already said, he really couldn't help it. It was impossible now to keep his face glued to a wall of silence, like a schoolboy in disgrace. He was the victim of his own simple heart, and his voice sang on of itself, regardless of time and place.

Then everyone there began to feel frightened of this strange fellow who would not stop singing. They were too far up now to send him back. The shadows halted in disorderly fashion, panic-stricken.

"Shut him up, never mind how!" said the officer, trembling—with fury no doubt—to the N. C. O.

The N. C. O. stiffened his neck, grunted, made a furious dash into the night—and soon a deep, a widespread silence came over the plain once more.

At dawn, the N. C. O. brought the fatigue party back to the trench, and on confronting the captain, said, "There's one missing."

"That's annoying," said the captain, who was keen on his men.

He noticed there was blood on the N. C. O.'s stripe.

"Wounded?" he asked.

"No, sir, it's only my knife."

"Ah, that's good," said the captain, guessing at gallantry.

LAUGHING JACK AND WEEPING JACK

HA! Ha! Ha!

Hi! Hi! Hi!

Always making you laugh, was Martin. There was no resisting his jokes. All the livelong day he sat in his little wire cage, like a black and white magpie, with his lockers and pigeon holes round him, selling stamps to the public, cracking his jokes and working away. Here was a young fellow who saw the funny side of life; he was a great hand at digging out the comic element in people, in daily events. Out from this little official centre, thanks to him, laughter went rippling through the town. And they all liked that—the old folk, the girls, the married women. He was a power in the land. Even quite important people—officials and tradesmen—used to say: "Martin's a funny fellow," and didn't mind his being such a character. And the local magistrate in his private sanctum felt a twinge of envy too, for he could only contradict people, while Martin made them laugh.

As I have said, women were attracted by him and were so ready to laugh when he spoke that

sometimes their surrender was as complete as it could be.

So Martin enjoyed general esteem, unlike the growers and grumbler. There were plenty of them; Joel, the lamp-lighter, represented the most abominable type of all. Joel painted life black; Martin brightened it up. Again, Joel was a regular repository for stories of people down on their luck, of things that "didn't ought to be." And more than that, like all people with a grudge against life, he was deep in anarchy and the red peril.

That was how things were in our little town, which was like any other little town in the world, when War was suddenly declared (in July, 1914, as perhaps you will remember).

They went off side by side. Martin and Joel were in the same year and the same regiment. And, of course, Joel looked black, swore at fate and talked of rank butchery. But Martin laughed louder than ever, breathing a deeper air outside his post office cage. Folks said, "He might be off on his holidays!"

At the front things went on in exactly the same way. Amidst the foulness and ferocious mechanical din of war, where thunderclaps and shreds of steel and copper nails feel about for men, Joel became a professional abuser of slaughter, and even of patriotism (he was actually heard to say that commissioned officers and ministers were not of finer clay). But Martin was unshaken; he remained the

prince of jesters. Joel was marked down as a maker of trouble and kept under observation by the gilded officers; here was a fellow who made heavy weather of things and pitied the men, till they began to think of things that they would never have dreamed of otherwise! But when he had had his way, Martin would pass by, wipe out the effect of his poisonous jeremiads with one or two well-timed jokes that stopped the fellows thinking too much about their own skins. The two of them were pitted against each other. And Joel would growl and writhe, ashen-faced under Martin's sallies, much to the delight of the miserable gallery.

A soldier like Martin, ringing with so many laughing changes, was invaluable for the morale of the company, "The fellow's a gold-mine," declared Captain Maqueron. "Why, he'd keep the sheep on the laugh all the way to the slaughter-house!" said Major Eckenfelder, who was a butcher and cattle-dealer in civilian life, as well.

One day, Martin got a bullet in the head. A pun stuck half-way out of his mouth. But if this event shut him up there and then, it did not shut him up for good and all. He escaped from that wound; what was more, escaped with all his waggish exuberance too.

But now it had changed in tone a little. They had had to trepan him, with the result that holes and gaps, and a certain disproportion had appeared in

his mind. And now his puns would be mixed up at times, with long quotations from the Catechism and French history, which came bubbling up out of the subconscious. In hospital, he became a regular buffoon, and launched out into gambols and grimaces and apish evolutions which astounded and delighted the patients chained in horizontal attitudes to their beds. And sometimes, they sent for the P. M. O. to watch the entertainment. "Dotty," was the P. M. O.'s diagnosis. And he explained that this joyful and comic exultation was simply a disturbance in his nervous system, which created a kind of rapid short circuit inside the victim's carcass.

They must have been devilish short of cannon-fodder just then, for they packed him off back to the front.

When he arrived with the little round lid on top (he had nearly caused an uproar on the road by playing the acrobat on a station platform) the chaps observed, "He's cracked," and voiced the opinion that it would have been wiser to send him to Bicêtre where they "patch 'em up."

But they weren't sorry that this hadn't been done, for Martin's whimsical outbursts provided even better entertainment now for his audiences in trench and rear. He laughed and fairly drove others to laughter. Felled though he had been—and thanks to the felling, too—he exuded diversion at every pore. More than ever now, he counteracted faint-

heartedness and was valued by his chiefs as a mascot. Whereas Joel, more than ever fed up with war, looked for all the world like a horrid scarecrow. And besides, Martin, thanks to his new-found reserves of strength, made quite a respectable soldier.

Well, an attack was made; one night, Martin found himself going over the top; friend Joel was at his side, rifle in hand, swearing black and blue as he went forward at the double.

But when the whole battalion had gone over, and our crack-pated Johnny saw the walls of exploding shell closing in, heard the terrible whistlings that were heading as like as not for him, the remnants of his brain refused duty. He took fright, dived into a shell-hole where nothing could be seen, and heard somewhat less of the show.

The attack was a dead failure. It had been carried out in defiance of common sense, without preliminaries, without proper information, thanks to a fit of spleen on the part of the brigadier-general. At last, the third of the battalion that was left came pouring headlong back into the attacking trenches.

Martin did not answer his name. He was reported missing.

But next night, a patrol found him in his shell-hole; he was making faces at the stars. The patrol sergeant led him in by the ear. On his way back

to quarters, he hopped and skipped and played Tom Fool.

But the failure of this attack had led to unpleasant consequences; misfortune would have it that the Head Office had got wind of the affair. The corps commander gave the brigadier a regular trouncing, and he, of course, threw the blame on the bad morale of his men. And as the two leaders got worked up over it all, it was decided to take steps to punish defaulters.

Martin was put under confinement because he had shirked his duty as a citizen and run to earth like a coward, three yards from his trench; Joel was put there too, though he had gone forward and only come back with the rest, because he was held responsible in connection with the bad morale of troops in that sector.

Both came up for court-martial. What with Joel's stiff hostility and acid replies—he even dared to mutter something about "the blame"—and Martin's incoherent remarks and indecent laughter, the military presidents were not favourably inclined. "But does this man Martin know what he's doing?" queried the youngest among them. "Yes!" the others cried, to a man. But for equity's sake, they called on the P. M. O., a five-striper, to give evidence. But he lunched at the general's table every day of his life and said, "He is certainly shamming." They were both condemned to death. For

the matter of that, the court had definite orders to do so, because the Higher Command held it desirable to clear the brigadier-general of any shadow of suspicion in connection with this lamentable attack, so conspicuously lacking in forethought and care. Besides, an example always makes an excellent impression. And it is also well known that for four good years this was the way with courts-martial; they always put orders before facts, and questions of policy before the paltry details of life.

Martin didn't know what to make of it all. He played Jack-a-napes quite hard in the converted dance-hall where the court was sitting, and when they were leading the men back to the cells after their sentence, he did the same.

Yet while this was happening, the expression on Martin's face underwent a change not seen before. For the first time in life, he seemed to be looking beyond the things about him, and asking why. A strange gleam shone in those eyes that never wept, save with laughing; for the first time, a film passed across them, of anguish and distress.

Only one was present to witness this; the two condemned men had been left alone together.

They had always been on bad terms with each other, as you have already heard. Joel raised his rebel's eyes and saw that Martin's crazy gaiety was changing into a craze of terror.

Martin spoke to him, "What's the game? Damned if I see it."

A flash of genius darted through the anarchist's soul and he answered, "Why, can't you see it's all a blooming joke?"

Martin believed him; without more ado, his mouth gaped wide, his tongue felt for a jest—and the danger of disaster was over.

But no! A little later, obstinate as madmen will be, he was asking, "Why are we shut in?"

"Well, it's true it looks like prison," said Joel, in a bantering tone (and he had the courage to punctuate the words with a little laugh). "But surely you know it's to keep us out of trouble?"

And that was quite enough to restore confidence for the time being to the heart of the prince of jesters, now little more than a child.

And so it was that Joel, guided by that first impulse, devoted his last hours of life to the task of playing mother, of succouring the human wreck driven in there by man's justice to founder at his side.

To this end, he desperately bent his will, watched his every word; guiltless and seeing, he only lived to save the man that was guiltless and blind.

Feeble as Martin's powers of reasoning were, he was quite capable of understanding that he had done nothing wrong, and this made it easier to play

out the comedy, at once so small and so sublime, enacted in this little corner of the War of Filth and Slime.

Next morning they brought them out in state. They marched off, with the two men in the centre.

“What are all these chaps doing in full turnout?” asked Martin, feeling suspicious and ready to plunge headlong into nightmares.

“There’s a beano on to-day. Can’t you see? Are you blind?”

Martin stared all the harder.

“It’s a proper swagger show, my boy,” Joel assured him, speaking in a natural voice (but not without clenching his fists) to convince him thoroughly.

In a field, the whole regiment was drawn up facing two posts, and there stood the colonel and Eckenfelder, the butcher major, very smart and sprack, for the great day’s work.

“What’s that they’re reading?”

“It’s a speech, my lad.”

“They’re talking about us, can’t you hear?”

“That’s because we’ve been through danger.”

The padre had drawn near. He overheard and understood. He stepped aside and did nothing, glad to cut short his share in the business, and contented himself with saying Amen in a low voice, head turned away.

And Joel, when they had torn a few buttons off

their coats and the strips of cloth bearing their regimental marks, went on to say:

"They're sending us back to Blighty. We're done with war, and no joking about it this time."

And actually Martin got quite absorbed, watching the line up and deploying of the troops.

At last, they were separated. Joel found time to say, "It's all to thank you for amusing the men so."

Martin believed him, for it sounded plausible.

"My word, what a thing it is! . . ." he said.

And sure enough, the hideous farce was played out just as Joel said it would be.

But Joel's turn came before his. A line flashed out into fire, and the wind from that line blew him over as if he had been made of paper.

And then, perhaps, came a moment when Martin saw the truth about the ways of war and men. But who can tell? At all events, he did not have to wait very long.

He fell, like a stone, vertically, as if he had sunk into the ground, as if the hailstorm aimed at his head had cut the legs from under him.

But when the march past was over, I saw his body, lying there like a disjointed puppet on the ground. His head was in a jelly. But he was laughing all the same. Aye, one saw that laugh, shivered to bits. Laughter was stamped for ever on the shapeless and beastly remains of that face, where life

and Fate had set it. His was the abiding ghastly image of the merriment of his race.

He was thrown, with Joel too, into a wide trench where other French corpses, hashed by bullets from German rifles, or French, already lay.

Perhaps it was he whom they fished up and made into the Unknown Soldier that lies beneath the Arc de Triomphe. Over his head, perhaps, sounds the endless tread of hero-worshippers, of statesmen hymning the sanctity of war, the refining influences of France, shining like a torch out over the world—while he laughs on, grinning eternally, in that dark inferno below the feet of civilisation.

BUTOIRE

BUTOIRE was dozing at the bottom of a trench ten paces long and one pace wide, where his little outpost was boxed in. He was curled up like a dormouse in a scooped-out hole rather like the bottom of a well, or cask even, when not quite dry. Now and then he gave a yawn, stirred, unstuck himself from the floor or side, then dropped back again, dozed off, his face glowing like a red mask in the dark.

Close by were the others, sitting knee to knee, talking. Overhead, on all sides, a terrific criss-crossing of French and German shells; the first hurtling down round Soissons Cathedral, and the others into Pasly quarries: two hurricanes tearing through space in opposite directions, like death, unseen of mortal eye.

Postaire was describing a tiff he had had with a stingy barman: "Jes' one little drop 'e gave me, in my coffee. 'Hey!' says I, 'give us a squint at that 'ere bottle.'"

Panneau was finishing off a long story: "Talk about a little bit of orl right. On each side of the plate, you 'ad a digger an' a little chopper, and be-

hind that, old cock, two darkies apiece, an' corked stuff at that!"

While he went on talking, Amochet began a story in his turn: "I was sitting, I was, in front of a glass. Just to take the taste out o' me mouth like. For there's no one what does for me, there isn't. I does for myself."

Plumely was staggering the chaps, just like the hens in the farmyard fable, with card tricks.

"There," he said; "there's the king of hearts, and there's the seven of spades."

He turned up the cards he named.

"Ah, oh, oh!" said they.

After this interlude the conversation returned to more solid topics.

"The stuff we plunked down inside that day Panneau asserted. "You know," he said, speaking to one and all, "you know what it takes to fill me up to the gob? Well, I can tell you, there was enough for us to . . ."

As for Postaire, proud of his gift for repartee, he was ruminating in triumph: "'Hey!' I said to him, I said, 'give us a squint at that 'ere bottle'!"

Butoire listened at first with only one ear. Then he cocked up both. The face that he turned towards the talkers seemed like a caricature, made pitiful with dust and tan and the drawn lines of neglect. Eagerly he listened to these snatches of conversa-

tion. They meant more to him than anything else in the world. He was a good soldier and a good fellow, but his weakness was eating, and still more, drinking. At all hours of the day and night, he made use of his canister—too much use. True, he told himself that he was a fool afterwards, as his canister grew empty, likewise his purse, by logic's magic law. He always regretted drinking when the drinking was done. With a shake of the head and a frown, he woul' say, "I'ze a fool!"— far more contritely too than those who repeat Jesus' and Marias. And even when he had a thick head, as the saying is, he never dropped off to sleep without giving one devout thought to his wife Adèle, and his little garden far away, where the asters danced round a wooden table in a ring.

But now, out of the little horizontal dug-out—a handkerchief would have covered the entrance—came first the feet, and then the body of Sergeant Métreur, who commanded the outpost. He slid himself along towards the group and hailed them, "Well, lads, there's more to it than that, but who's coming out with me to-night on patrol duty?"

"Here, sergeant," said Butoire.

"Here, here," said others.

When night fell, Butoire sat down in the bottom of his cockleshell hole and began slowly making ready, that is to say, overhauling his rifle and boot-laces by the light of a greyish sky, faintly be-

sprinkled with rockets and stars set in a thunderous framework of shells.

It was at this moment, out in the heart of this flat and deserted wilderness, that shadows came jumping down into the outpost, shadows doubled up under burdens, that rattled and seemed encumbered and made noises like a ration party.

This slit in the ground where the outpost lay was six or seven hundred yards in front of our lines at Saint-Christophe, and looking the other way, a hundred yards off the Aisne, the far bank of which was then in German hands. There was no sap or trench leading to the little outpost. On all sides it was surrounded by the plain, as an island by the sea. So the only way of getting in or out was to wait for the cover of night. And the sole inhabitants of earth's surface in this part of the front were dead men, sinking downwards slowly to drown in earth—and living shadows.

The ration party had brought up lentils. Wine too. Butoire, who had had some wine brought on his account, and didn't feel hungry for lentils, filled up his canister and sat down beside it. The canister lay there, stopper out, imploring him with one round eye; and Butoire consented. Just a little drop to begin with, just a touch, a kiss, like.

The canister was a beauty. It held two litres and in those days cans like that were rare on the front. It had belonged to a Moroccan; struck by a brain-

wave, he had let off a blank cartridge in the neck-head and distended it until it could take two litres and a half. The other chaps knew all about it, but the shop hands didn't, so that when wine was served out from the canteen tap in rest billets, Butoire was always robbed of a bit less than the rest.

When Sergeant Métreur inspected the four men he was taking off on patrol in the dark, Butoire, with his back to the trench wall, held himself up stiffly, and made a good show of it. But when the little band hoisted themselves up out of the trench and, crawled, kneeled, then marched out over the plain, Butoire, last in the file, felt rather uncertain inside, and floundered through the dark air as if it had been water. A grim effort of will, like an iron band, held him up straight. No wobbling, hey!

He concentrated on making no sound as he trod over the blackened felt of the fields, holding his rifle—that dangerous object—in his right hand, well away from the body, and gripping his bayonet sheath firmly with the left to keep him quiet. He tried not to lose sight of the shadowy, shapeless back of the man before him; weird how it went clean out, came back, and sometimes became two or three!

But the fumes, quickened by the night air, made his brain as woolly as the clouds hanging ominously overhead and at the same time dragged his feet strongly downwards towards earth. Hardly had

they been skirting the lower edge of the embankment which itself skirts and overlooks the river for ten minutes, when Butoire slowed down in spite of himself, dropped behind, fell farther and farther to the rear, and began to realise with trepidation that as he walked, he was dropping off to sleep.

Sense of duty, vague fears of well-merited punishment, goaded him forward. He swore at himself, took a few more steps, was on the point of calling to his companions, out of the depths of his misery, but—gods above!—he stopped the cry in his throat, with a sudden effort: utter a cry in this place, where silence and gloom were all there was to hold a thin shield between them and death!

He held his peace, but stopped. Nothing, now, could stop him sinking down, down to earth and sleep. He stumbled on the top of the embankment, crouched down. In maudlin mood, he spoke softly to his rifle, thought of his wife Adèle, as he always did in a crisis. He saw the outskirts of his village under a sunny sky: the warm deliciousness of the fruit-trees in the sun; he saw it, too, as it appeared on a winter's morning: the plateau behind the farm stripped bare, the pond with its sheet of glass, where men and women passing by the clumpy bushes appear as though tricked out in newspapers.

Sleep at last laid firm hands on his limbs, numbed the brain in which the last stubborn traces of will

were still whirling round, forcibly closed his eyes, and Butoire slept.

He woke in the middle of a stormy nightmare; a band pressed on his temples, an ache sledge-hammered in his brain; his stomach was a ravening fire. He scarcely knew where he was, or even who he was.

And yet, in the same moment, a noise made him prick up his ears in the terror of the night. The alert instincts of the night watcher were at work in him, for all the hurly-burly of his thoughts. And perhaps—so strong in him was this habit of living on the alert—it was this very noise that had roused him. He felt that some danger was near.

Stifling his hiccups, sick at heart, painfully and clumsily fumbling his way, he dragged himself over the grass. High up on this bank above the Aisne, as over the top of a mighty trench, he thrust out a burning head, with eyelids throbbing, an unearthly singing in his brain.

Below him, the embankment dropped almost vertically. Thick darkness made it impossible to see down to the bottom, but far below the faint glint of water was discernible, and away on the far side, a pale and indistinct ribbon—the towing path. On this long pale curve, stretching out into the background of night, a group of shadows was unmistakably moving. It was a German patrol.

The patrol was lost to sight in the dark recesses

of a large, confused mass stepping across the inky black of the river. Pasly Bridge. Butoire knew it so well in its night disguise that he muttered its name, even though struggling then with a kind of nightmare.

But suddenly his wildly throbbing senses were called back to a point much nearer, by the sound he had already heard. He fumbled with his eyes through the darkness. And then, scarcely twenty paces below, close, ever so close, he saw a German climbing up the slope, gradually, on hands and knees.

This enemy soldier was making straight for Butoire's staring eyes, down among the murky upheavals of the dyke. His rifle happened to be lying in front of him; he took rough aim at the climbing shape, fired. The German, who was on all fours, fell on his face and lay still.

The shot had sent out a resounding noise into the night. Butoire, feeling himself suddenly calm, freed at last from alcoholic fumes, waited a little, holding his breath. One or two detonations, calling one to the other, burst forth here and there round the horizon, flashing out their momentary red haloes. Then nothing.

A good quarter of an hour passed. Under the stress of this violent emotion, Butoire had largely regained clearheadedness. The moon was spreading forth a filmy wrap, through muslin hangings in

black and grey. Sharp cold was drying the mud on his face and sobered him completely. He was only a little numb now.

He decided to make for his victim and search him. That done, he would return to the outpost: mere child's play! He rejoiced to think that this homecoming would be quite enough to silence any blame for deserting his patrol!

He began to move then, with all desirable care, on hands and knees, planting his rifle down a little further ahead each time. He got over the ridge, flattening himself out to make it hump up as little as possible, and moved down the slope, his rifle with him. He reached the dead German. Sure enough, he was dead: his skull was just like a broken red egg and the brain lying among these shell-like fragments was soft to the touch. Butoire felt over his clothes and weapons in the professional manner. Then he started back, with a stifled cry: "What!" Then up he got, waving a tin hat in the air like a madman, and, in the heart of that awful abyss of sleep, caring not for the death that he invoked in this wise on his head, caring not at all, he bellowed aloud.

The man he had killed was a French soldier!

From that moment until the coming of dawn, Butoire, overwhelmed, appalled, stayed there on the slope, beside the corpse.

He sobbed, with his head resting in his hands, he

struck himself on the chest, on the belly, he threw up his arms on high. Blear-eyed, he muttered, over and over again:

"I killed him because I was drunk. If I hadn't been drunk, I wouldn't have killed him."

God damn and blast him! whatever could have told him that it was a German?

Nothing, nothing whatever. He had assumed it without thinking, because the climber came up from Aisne side and he had fired point blank when it was impossible to recognise a man, even a man climbing in the dark. But there it was, he was drunk!

He sat down on the ground. As the minutes went by, he sank lower and lower into the depths of terror and despair. He struggled against it all, he lifted his hands to heaven.

He was cold, he was hot. He didn't know what to do. He thought of setting off for the outpost at a run to denounce himself. He got up, took three steps forward. The words that he would blurt forth were already on the tip of his tongue:

"Sergeant, I'm just a dirty swob!"

Then, willy-nilly, he came back to the corpse, tumbled down beside it, touched it, moved it, lifted it, kissed it. He made frantic efforts to warm it back into life in his arms. He tried to set it up on knees, facing him. But the man was already as stiff as a tree-trunk.

Then Butoire groaned more loudly still, struck with the sudden thought that he would never see Adèle any more. He took her photograph out of his pocket, tore it up, threw it away, that they two might be separated for ever—the unhappy woman and the monster that was himself. Then he impulsively cursed the man who was to blame—Gideon, the ration party man who had sold him the wine that had made him drunk. Then he stopped cursing, and quietly began to cry.

The next moment, a thought surged up in him; an attack of rage against something definite was upon him: he tore his drinking canister away from his body, threw it to the ground, pierced it with his bayonet, trampled on it as if it had been his own heart, and from that half-emptied can a blood-red pool dripped forth.

Then, once again, he moved away, came back, went round in a circle; at every turn horrible thoughts assailed him, like some damned creature, that nothing—no, nothing could save.

Out of the heavenly dome the blue black faded. The expanse grew chalk-coloured. The whitening dust of the sky shone terribly bright on the identity disc that swung at his wrist: "Butoire Adolph 1905." Then, as an unending shudder ran through the very depths of his vitals, he thought: "A murderer wears that name and year." For the last time, again he saw his house, bereft.

The sky grew clearer yet; long lines of trees descended the slope towards the accursed place.

Then, with the finger of day pointing at him across endless space, on the top of the dyke, he rose to his fullest height, immensely tall, and stood still. Soon a bullet came, whack! onto the cloth of his great-coat.

He gave an *umph!* as if eased of life, and fell to his knees, then onto his back.

It was in a bright little schoolroom, turned hospital ward, that he woke up, buried in white.

One of the wounded, more lively on his feet than the rest, was busy in the room slopping about in his old slippers over the floor. Passing by on his way to the kitchen with the tin dishes, he saw that Butoire's eyes were opening; he went up to him and said:

"You're blinking your eyes a bit. Shows you're better. You know, they've done you up with the Military Medal 'anging at the foot of your bunk; they planked it on double quick time, the very morning after the five o'clock brought yer; afraid of you buzzin' off, they were, you poor blighter. For that 'Un dressed up as a Frenchie what you killed, 'e was carrying maps of hutmost importance. But I must be off to the kitchen with this stuff. Lending a hand like to the 'ospital staff, I am, seeing there's only one of 'em. Oh, I know I could

do a bit more if I liked; but the more you do in this world, the less thanks you get!"

"Ah!" Butoire muttered.

He went off to sleep again, unable to understand.

A long story like that couldn't penetrate all at once, take up lodging in his brain as quick as all that! Gradually, bit by bit, that night, next morning, he began to understand. A new and dazzling fact was changing the look of the world, and this cosmic upheaval found voice in him in these laconic words:

"A swob I was, and now I'm a hero."

A hero! Beans. Life returned to him in bliss. Each thing turned a delightful face, offered a new taste. In his eyes, these mortal surroundings of ours wore their Sunday best.

He felt there was no need to tell his story about the wine, even to the nurse, who was gentle as a sister to the brotherhood of men. For after all, it was because of the drop he had taken that he had played the hero, and one couldn't help feeling just a bit proud.

But the tragedy of it was that Butoire was a simple, honest soul and that he was forced to do a deal of thinking while his convalescence slowly progressed. All these things together had fatal effect upon him. And so one night, looking out on the asphalt garden of the "orspittle," after thoughts of his house and Adèle, bless me if he didn't begin

thinking of the young fellow whose head he had messed up, lying out there under the wide spaces threshed with shell fire, rotting day after day, night after night, while he lay basking there in comfort and glory. And so it was that he began muttering to himself: "That blighter, 'e might have been a Frenchman! . . ."

Honest folk are the prey of things much greater than themselves, which have a remarkable way of thwarting them. Poor Butoire, it was no use! Names such as "German," "Frenchman," and the various definitions of "heroism" became mere words, fluttering in the air above one solid fact—and that was the body of a fellow-being, owning, like him, a heart, like him and others, a brain, that he had seen with his eyes and touched with his hand.

So true was this, that even before his bodily repairs were complete, Butoire made this observation:

"Me, the hero,—I'm a dirty swob."

This discovery was kept confidential, but he punished himself by taking a vow not to drink again, since drunkenness had aided and abetted heroism.

When he returned to his squad, after being patched up, renewed and recoloured in the South, his comrades offered him wine to drink. He refused.

"Thanks, lads, no! I shan't feel thirsty any more," he said.

Disconcerted by these enigmatic and paradoxical words, his friends returned to the charge:

"Just a drop, eh?"

Butoire flew into a temper.

"Now then, get off it! Who d'yer take me for?"

'And not another word, not another inch, could they get out of him.

At first he blushed, but at length grew quite sporting about taking water with his meals. It wasn't easy to begin with. When he said that he would never thirst after wine again he had lied, not without feeling the secret smart of pleasure, but he had lied all the same.

Later on, in civilian life, he went a little further.

At first, his habit was to carry his Military Medal in his pocket, and one day, while talk about the gallant deed was going on around him, he stammered out bravely:

"He was a man, when all's said and done."

"A man! No, but I say, you're not one of these pacifist rotters, are you? I say, you fellows, did you hear what he said?"

And Butoire, who no longer felt a hero, stopped being anyone else's hero.

TWO ACCOUNTS

HE was off to Morocco as a volunteer, by boat. And on that day, which happened to be the 1st October, 1925, many others went off with him too, and many more have gone since—attracted by the fine promises of official fishers of men, publicists and army procurers and lawyer-journalists employed in boosting up French civilisation throughout the world, and in Morocco in particular.

This soldier boy, Oliver Bonnoron, was of no more importance than all the other soldier boys that swarmed like ants on the transport. But as our eyes have singled him out from the rest, our sympathy is for him and we like him most of all.

And as he was young, straightforward, attractive and happy-go-lucky, we can take him for the type of soldier boy who goes off to the wars on his own because he hasn't yet come to understand the meaning of life and death, or seen the power of the Father of Lies.

The army transport *Haiti*, of the Transatlantic Line, had just left the shore of France, then, with a cargo of brand new human freight. But amongst the crowd there were one or two army specimens of the terrible old school; in particular, a sergeant

of the 3rd Colonial Infantry. This sergeant was one of that breed of swine which our staff officers and civil servants have the modesty to describe by the words: "Smart N. C. O." He was a brute and a drunkard who always kept the tanks well filled. We all know that colonial infantry regiments are chiefly run by shaky-handed lunatics of this class.

The sergeant in question was walking up and down the deck of the ship, which we may call a cargo ship. The French coast was turning to grey, in the distance and the twilight—it was 8.30 P.M. Numbers of men had come up on deck to enjoy the sea air and watch the fading light, and the last scrap of the vision of France which was fainting away between sky and sea. Bonnoron had also come up from below, and with face to the wind, was gazing over the sea with that thoughtful look which overlays outward things with inward things and mingles them curiously.

The sergeant was staggering about from group to group. He was glaringly drunk; his cap was bashed down over one eye, his features were twisted up, and his eyes were watery. One after another, he clutched hold of the men, questioned them, stared at them, growling like a mad dog. "Are you the feller?" The madman was looking for someone. He had had a quarrel that morning with a Martinique sergeant, and a few glasses had given birth to an *idée fixe* in that sclerotic brain: kill the Martinique fellow. When you've had a quarrel with

someone, that's the only way out, eh? And he fumbled along after the black sergeant, staggering, persistent, pouring out threats, revolver in hand.

Things were dancing before his eyes; the madman thought he saw his abhorrent messmate. He straightened his arm and fired.

Oliver Bonnoron, shot in the stomach, fell back groaning:

“I'm done for. Poor mother.”

And those were the last words of our soldier boy. He immediately passed into the world of unconsciousness. Suffering alone lived on within him, and having thus spoken, he was already as good as dead, although his heart went on beating for one whole day.

The *Haiti* hove to. She was off the little port called Royan. The wireless instruments on board were summoning assistance, and a launch came out to take off that young bullet-pierced body, which life was leaving slowly, which would have groaned aloud if it had had the power. But all that was left to do was to die, and death took place in Royan Hospital, after thirty hours' agony.

Many can testify to all this, and in particular certain young men who gave formal evidence and are called—to cross our t's and dot our i's—Bourdeau, Rolland and Rocheteau.

Now when “poor mother,” who lived at Angoulême, heard of the death of her son, she wrote to the War Minister, distracted with sorrow, to ask for

an explanation. What terms would this exalted personage employ, what heartfelt words of condolence, what excuses, to atone in the name of the army for the crime of a brutal N. C. O.?

Here is the letter which Mme. Bonnoron received from the War Office, which took her boy of twenty-one away, only to give back his dead body, a few hours after his boat had sailed.

“MADAM,

“In reply to your request, I have the honour to communicate to you hereunder the report of the Inquiry which I instituted to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the death of Private Bonnoron (Oliver) of the 107th Infantry Regiment, wounded on board the transport *Haiti*, on the 1st October, during the voyage from Bordeaux to Morocco.

“While he was being taken to hospital, Private Bonnoron made the following statement:

“‘While I was down on the lower decks on the *Haiti* Transatlantic Line, a dispute began between a sergeant and a black. The latter struck the sergeant, who thereupon went to fetch his service revolver from his mess and threatened the black soldier with it. I thereupon dashed at the sergeant to disarm him and just as I seized his arm, he pulled the trigger and the pistol went off, wounding me in the stomach.’

“Private Bonnoron died in Royan Hospital at 2 in the morning in spite of the care bestowed upon him.

“Although this deplorable accident was entirely involuntary, the sergeant responsible was sent to prison on arriving at Capablanca and handed over to the military authorities to be tried before court-martial.

“Declaration of decease was signed by the Mayor of Royan on October 2nd.

“I remain your obedient Servant . . .”

Let us ignore the air of detached indifference, and (to speak plainly) the underdbred manner in which the Great Panjandrum of the Armies set forth, in the style of a county clerk, what he calls the report of an Inquiry.

Here we have two accounts of the same affair. One true, the other the military version.

The truth is that the War Minister's declarations are nothing but a tissue of lies. Profiting by the fact that there was—doubtless, by mere chance—no attempt to investigate, to make a formal charge, to cross-examine witnesses after the 'accident'; profiting by the dispersal of the witnesses or potential accusers in the inferno of the Riff country, where soldiers go without much chance of return; hoping, too, that the waves of the sea and the four winds of heaven had borne away that fatal evening's work, the grand master of the French Army, who had every reason to know the truth, writes a scandalous travesty of the facts to safeguard the prestige of the non-commissioned rank. This newspaper serial story is a wholesale concoction. Not one thing happened as this *chiffon de papier* from Rue St. Dominique says it happened. Bonnoron made no statement while on his way to hospital; at the time, he was already a corpse. The three witnesses I have mentioned, all of the same regiment, the 107th, who set out with him from Limoges Barracks, made three separate statements which corre-

spond so closely and exactly that the governmental imposture is simply swept clean away.

As for the loathsome drunkard (I have been told that in the army drunkenness is an aggravating circumstance), who had indisputably committed murder with premeditation (mistaken identity had nothing to do with it), he did indeed appear before the court-martial held at Casablanca on the 13th January, 1926. The court condemned him to two months' imprisonment and fined him 200 francs with remission of sentence, which means that they sentenced him to nothing at all. A hypocritical sentence, worth less than no trial at all.

What plainer method could there be of telling N. C. O.'s of the Colonial and other infantry regiments, that they would be very foolish to put themselves out should they feel inclined to make a soldier's carcass the target for their bullets? They run the risk of immunity, if I may say so.

When will the working classes, those tragic purveyors to the slaughter-house, who provide such splendid food for powder in time of war—when will they spit forth what is left in them of the traditional worship of national armies, of courts-martial and of those upperlings called War Ministers?

DEAD ALIVE

DURING the war, as the result of various wounds, I passed through a good many hospitals. I was at Breteuil, and at Chartres, and at Courville, and at Brives. The inside of Plombières Hospital saw me too—saw enough of me, I may add, after a brief stay, for I did not live in odour of sanctity with the black-robed nuns, with the supervisors and orderlies in cassocks of blue. Their uniforms were blue, but their faces were ruddy with health, for one and all, from the highest to the lowest, were vicars in ordinary life.

But I now wish to speak of another matter—of an evening we spent, sick and wounded side by side, round the stove which battled with November, in the large ward upstairs.

Our talk was of misery, wrongs and crimes. Every survivor floating on the surface there had his own true story to tell. During these evenings, I collected the stories of many eye-witnesses which I afterwards used in my books. And if those pages have sometimes moved the reader, it was because they woke to life some vibration of the living truth,

like those violins which, old fables say, stirred the heart-strings of all listeners, not because an artist had made them, but because somebody's soul was imprisoned within them.

One of the speakers—I shall call him Peter—said this:

“There was a man dead alive once—lived after he was shot. And to prove it, I’ll give his name—Waterlot Francis.

“They shot him all right—it was up against a haystack. But after his execution, he was as fit as a fiddle.”

Peter told us the story; it began with a picture of exhaustion and despair.

Round Meaurs, near Sézanne, the soldiers of 327th line regiment were supporting the 270th which held the front lines. On the night of September 5th and 6th, 1914, they were on the look-out in the outskirts of a wood.

These were Peter’s words:

“They had chucked themselves down on the ground on the edge of this wood and were snoozing beside their haversacks—just like ‘em they looked. Leave was given that night to sleep, fully equipped. You bet they slept; ever since war broke out these chaps from the North, who had been in the Belgian retreat, had had a rough time of it. Worn out they were. What with tramping this way and that, and then the long march backwards, they had had that

too. Always on their feet, always tied to their haversacks like walking packs of troubles, always goaded on, always on the watch, always damned. And they were already played out when, three days before this, the great offensive began, and piled on the agony.

“So there they were, sleeping in the dark, dead beat and dead still, and truce hung for a moment over this half-cemetery of soldiers.

“But up at the front, in the firing line, there was dirty work. The German armoured cars had managed to get in on top of the French trenches and were pouring lead into them. Taken by surprise and completely staggered, the 270th chaps, N. C. O.’s ahead, gave ground, left the trench and streamed back. They reached the wood, and the 327th, who were lying on the ground asleep, were stirred up by the feet of these men wandering through the night with the enemy’s fire close on their heels. So then they blinked an eye, stood up, shook themselves into life. They saw, as well as eyes could see in the dark, these ghosts hurrying by! No N. C. O. had thought fit to stay with the men. Discipline was gone. And so, of course, up they got, away they went with the flowing tide.

“But this panic (as you know, a panic has something mechanical about it, like a railway engine, and it can’t be stopped all at once when steam’s up and it’s for running off the lines)—the panic didn’t

last long. The nightmare vanished with the first streaks of light. The men belonging to the 327th formed up again in Lachies village, and there were a good three hundred now, beginning to look around for their regiment and yawning.

“But, worse luck for them, who should come trotting that way but General Boutegourd.

“General Boutegourd was in command of the 51st Division. And he was *the* brute of brutes.

“You’ll understand,” said Peter, “that if I give him that name when there are dozens of first-rate candidates among general officers commanding, it is because there are pretty good reasons.

“He had the heaviest hand and sharpest tongue of all leaders. He would clap his revolver on you on the least provocation and was always talking of wiping out French soldiers (because, you see, he wouldn’t have nearly such a good chance with the German soldiers). He often would hit laggards and slow-coaches himself with his cane, and we all know that that same cane stopped our fellows in Guignicourt from drinking the water which the inhabitants had put out in buckets along the side of the street for them to drink. If you gave way to temptation, down on your shoulders whack! came the care of this little god almighty (who didn’t feel thirsty or else was frightened and wanted to hop it still quicker). And many other things he’s done of which he shall hear more.

"So this was the general, complete with staff, who ran into the lads of the 327th in Lachies Street.

"'Who are these men?' shouted brassy brass hat, in a fury already.

"He questioned one.

"'What's that you say? Looking for your regiment? You don't catch me with that story. You're deserters. Pick me out six men and a corporal, and shoot them on the spot.'

"Used as the general staff was to saying Amen to all the utterances of this pontiff whose cap was so stiff with gold braid, the officers now pulled a long face and took upon themselves to say:

"'Excuse us, sir, but that can't be done.'

"To be brief, they pointed out that things weren't quite so simple as that: these men had not abandoned their posts, for they hadn't been in action. They were resting in the rear and had been swept back in the night, with no leaders to control them in the general panic. Besides, before shooting seven men, they must sentence them, and before sentencing them, try them, and that was exactly what courts-martial were for. Two honourable men, Colonel Vezat and Major Richard Vitry (which proves that we must never generalise, and talk about 'the officers' *en bloc*), submitted these arguments to ears which did not understand, then begged, implored this Grand Mogul creature who held life and death in his hands.

“All for nothing. He had seven men chosen by lot, and separated out. He stopped there to see it done. He enjoyed this retribution of master on slave. He also enjoyed saying No to one of the seven who dropped on his knees and begged for mercy, crying out that he had five children.

“Apparently he had the law on his side. All that's needed is for an old campaigner to be taken with a craze for murdering; never mind whether there's any justifiable reason for the whim, or even no reason at all; up he comes, scoops up seven chance men out of a crowd and says: 'To the stake with them.' It's down in the Regulations; and that in a country which pretends to have some respect for the fighting soldier, where one old fellow who commands some attention has declared that soldiers *have* rights, and where some funny fools have also claimed rights, actually known as *les Droits de l'Homme*, for *all* men.

“But if the law's an ass, well, it's the lookout of the people who are fools enough to be had that way. What I can't understand is how a man who's done a job like that can walk about in the street and show his nose anywhere without getting spat at by decent people, and getting his head knocked off by someone more decent still.

“They packed the seven of them into some old barn, and next day at dawn, a detachment took them out into the fields, to find a haystack to stand them up against.

"About a mile from the village they found one that would do. They lined them up."

At this point, someone interrupted Peter, the teller of the story, and said—or rather moaned out, as in a dream:

"How is it that men can always be found ready to kill their comrades?"

Peter merely answered:

"They're found all right.

"Well, they lined them up, asked for their handkerchiefs and bandaged their eyes. The detachment lined up, rifles and all. The command was given: 'Fire!'

"The squad obeyed because they were miserable worms and hadn't the pluck to be men. But though they obeyed the order, they felt it, you know, and they shut their eyes the way kids do, as they pulled the trigger.

"After this magnificent salvo, they set about finishing them off. A regimental sergeant-major, true to army tradition, stepped forward revolver in hand. He blew out the brains of two. One of the victims, the father of five, cried out as his skull opened up. Then the R. S. M. had enough. They say he wept because he couldn't stick it. So he didn't go any further. There are fellows like that. They do all the harm they can in their execution of their b——y duty, then they stop when they've had enough. They're better chaps than the rest, some say. I don't see it. He ought to have had enough before he began.

"When the word to fire was given, one of the seven fell like a log and never stirred again. So he had fallen, as I might say, just a tiny bit too soon, a split second before the bullet came along. The man opposite him hadn't seen him when he fired because he shut his eyes, and the adjutant hadn't spotted him, either, because he'd only finished off the two first in the row, feeling sick.

"When the firing squad pushed off, this man was astonished to find he wasn't dead. He felt himself carefully, and made sure he wasn't the least bit dead. He crawled away to hide himself for a bit on t'otherside of the stack, just like a miserable stunned bird, then got up on his feet and ran off like mad, straight ahead.

"An hour after, those passing saw six bodies instead of seven under the haystack. Five only were corpses; the sixth had simply been wounded—fractured thigh. They picked him up and dressed him.

"As for the hale and hearty one, he ran all night and fetched up next day in some billets. "Who's this old bird?" said the fellows there. His hair had actually gone white (though he was a fair-haired chap and only twenty-seven), which proved to me that this going-all-white-in-a-moment business doesn't only happen in novels (for once, then, a thing that happened in the war agrees with the stories in books)!

"In the billets, he made a clean breast of the

whole affair—a foolish thing to do. But they didn't hand him over; they took him on in the regiment, as supernumerary. They couldn't put his name on the roll or give him a number, for by the regulations he was dead, and a "dead deserter" at that (for that's what they call them officially). So he was the odd soldier of the 233rd Line Regiment. And he used to shake like a leaf when he thought how they might fetch his case up into daylight and put matters straight by killing him properly. Meanwhile he was put with the ensign bodyguard, a job that keeps you safe as you're never in the firing line.

"He was a miner, and belonged to Montigny-en-Gohelle. He had been mobilised on the 3rd of August, the very day his wife was giving birth to their first-born, but he'd never seen the baby, as it was born in the afternoon and he had to leave in the morning. I know the names of the other six, too, and could tell you them. There were even one or two like Hubert—his relations got a military medal, a military cross and a mention in despatches out of it—for at headquarters they had discovered what a dastardly business it was and wanted to hide it up with ornaments. But I shan't mention anyone but Waterlot."

One of the circle made bold to say:

"Don't you go giving his name like that, old chap. The less known about it all, the better for him, eh?"

“Fat lot he cares about it all, the poor blighter,” returned Peter, “seeing as how he was knocked out by a shell later on, and properly. Don’t you worry.

“It was this way. One day, his new regiment ran across his old regiment, at some cross-roads. He simply couldn’t resist the desire to go back. Funny thing the way a man hangs on to the number of his regiment, as if it meant something. So once again he did his job as a soldier. And it isn’t in reason that a plain infantryman who does his job from the start of the war in a fighting regiment, should keep on his legs for long (though it has been known). Once he was seriously wounded and got patched up and went back to the job that men don’t ask for. But on the 16th June in ’15, during the Artois offensive at Hébuterne, a shell mopped him up for good and all.

“And who knows? Perhaps the poor blighters who sent up that shell were poor blighters just like him—p’raps the men in that firing squad were too—although it’s true they were *told* to do murder, in a language that wasn’t their own. Anyway, killed he was at last, by his own kind.”

“Sure he was,” we all murmured in chorus.

WHOLESALE MURDER

WAR-TALK? No one wants it now. And they have been saying so for years. And yet, so long as the old law, which wills that same causes be followed by same effects, holds good, our interest in war must be, not a thing of the past, but of the present and future. Unless, of course, we turn round and begin attacking the causes themselves!

Be that as it may, and coming to my story, the subject of *War* had its interest for a group of officers sitting that day in the peaceful atmosphere of a café, that well-known heavy atmosphere, woven of coffee and tobacco fumes.

This was in Antibes, a few years ago, when the town—one of the loveliest and most picturesque of all towns on Mediterranean shores—had not yet been disfigured by the demolition of the old ramparts, by builder's plots in the central square, and was not then visibly smeared over with speculator's blight.

One of the officers sitting there, by name Lieutenant Béranger, of the 3rd Antibes Infantry, was waxing sentimental about his fighting days, talking about them to his companions, two majors. Lieutenant Béranger's recollections were tinged with

a certain pride. And well they might be—for he was boasting how he had finished off some wounded Germans with the butt end of a rifle.

But Battalion Commander Mathis, in charge of Cagnes Camp, had two more stripes on his sleeve than the lieutenant. And so, as was only right, his story went one better.

It was the other major—he belonged to a very different class of man—who treasured up his noble confessions:

“I was captain then,” said Mathis, “commanding a battalion during the February offensive round Fleury. Two hundred German prisoners were captured in Powder Gully. When the scrap was over, I had the prisoners lined up without arms in two files; I picked out twenty and sent the remaining 180 back into the trenches. Then I had them done in. My men hesitated, of course, to begin with, but when I repeated the order they went for the prisoners. . . .”

I will interrupt the monologue at this point to think a little and to allow you to think of the real meaning of these words which were caught up into the air of this *café* in Antibes, round the marble-topped tables, in the corner of a room where the door opened but rarely and where one or two country figures formed the background, while an obliging waiter hurried to and fro with cups and glasses clinking on his well-loaded tray.

The slang expression "doing them in," a kind of pirouette in words, was used by Major Mathis to avoid a clear description of the butcher's work he was talking about. What it really means is this: men—one hundred and eighty of them, an endless line—standing up in a trench, without arms, trembling, scare-eyed, guilty, by all accounts, of nothing more than obedience to their leaders; and at these young victims other men armed with bayonets and knives were to rush, slit throats and stomachs in cold blood, without any "flying start," as runners say.

Imagine the scene. The bloodthirsty command is given. The soldiers hesitate. Kill all these young fellows, never seen before, standing a few yards away? It was too much; their limbs are paralysed. The major remembers how they hesitated—a point very much in his favour, since he overcame it triumphantly. They *must obey*. Promises, threats. What were his gesticulations in that moment? What did he yell? Then, no doubt, a push, and he sends off one reluctant soldier down the hill: one of them summons up enough determination to lay hold of a living body standing before him, slits his throat or runs him through the belly. Then off starts another, and another, and another, seized with black and hideous frenzy, goaded on by the screams, by the fresh blood streaming from these hacked and mangled bodies.

Major Mathis went on in these words:

"They massacred the lot. When I brought back the twenty survivors, the Colonel said to me: 'I thought you had captured a battalion of them.' I answered: 'I made two-hundred prisoners, but one-hundred and eighty of them stayed in the trenches, and won't leave them in a hurry.' The Colonel looked annoyed and said: 'Don't you go boasting about it, or your Cross might easily go west.' 'I wouldn't lose my decoration for a thing like that,' said I. And sure enough, I got the Cross soon afterwards."

While awaiting better things Captain Mathis has become battalion commander, and since then, has proudly paraded his Legion of Honour ribbon, if one may so call it, in various garrisons. For such is the way with Civilisation, which marches over the globe, wherever it may, massacring unarmed races on the plea that they are savages.

I called attention to this affair—one of the vilest in our vile times—in the newspapers. The *Progrès Civique* was concerned about it and the *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme* raised hands to heaven. "This is intolerable," said the *Progrès Civique* and the League. "We must have a ruthless inquiry, those responsible must pay the penalty: either Major Mathis shall be punished, or else the writer of this libellous article." And the League took up the question. I had never hoped for as much. Some years after, I asked the League how matters stood. The

reply was that the League would be only too glad to look into the question if I produced more witnesses, for I had only quoted one, and a time-honoured Latin proverb had ruled that one witness is not enough: *testis unus, testis nullus*. In vain did I reply that the witness was one of peculiar importance, in view of the fact that he was an officer of equal rank, who gave the very words that the culprit had uttered in public, and further, that the words had been made public and had created something of a stir, without drawing forth any denial whatever. The League's only reply was dignified silence.

That is the League's own business. But how much longer will murderers of the Mathis type find whole rows of murderers ready to their hand?

THE DASTARD TRAIN

ON the night of December 11th-12th, 1917, the station of Modane, which lies in France, close to the Italian frontier, was swarming with travellers.

They were strangely, terribly alike, these phantom travellers that crowded the platforms and waiting-rooms. They were dressed in poor and sorry garments, and dressed the same, every one. Most of them seemed to be suffering; their shoulders stooped, their feet dragged after them. Over the faces of the most helpless-looking mud and exhaustion had spread a grinning mask. Only a few looked like ordinary men.

These shadows, all dressed in the same dingy-coloured clothes, were moving up and down in the gloom of the platform, or sitting on the ground. Only the sharp light of the station lamps cut them out into real shapes; then they appeared half-black and half-white; the faces of some were merely hollows; others were red and glowing, like Chinese lanterns.

But all looked happy. Many were talking aloud, many were singing, and even some of those who had sunk to the ground were whistling.

It will be guessed these unfortunates who looked so happy were soldiers on leave. They were French soldiers on their way home for a spell, back from the Italian front after the battles on the Piave.

The Piave! The word has lost something of its power, of its full flavour, if I may speak so, in these last ten years; for ten years can make a great void in a people's brain.

But in those days it meant a desperate, tormenting endeavour, a frantic struggle against other soldiers who were in the hands of other big men-owners. These soldiers had done what they had been told to do. The host had marched, encamped and marched again; run, fired, hurled themselves into scorching flame; they had melted away, drilled themselves with holes through and through. Justly one might say that they had all committed suicide, yet only some had died. And so with the lessening of numbers, the army had at last consolidated the position. These soldiers took much delight in recounting the incidents of the campaign, and were already playing like children with their recollections.

Now they were far away from the Piave and already in France; no longer could they hear the shouts of triumph in the plains below, bred of their heroic doings. They were waiting for the train in the Modane frontier railway station—where even now, ten years after, one still half-fancies the platforms alive with fresh bustlings and soldiery.

Now the good old giant of a train appeared and drew up beside the platform on its iron road. And these survivors of war, turned free men for a time, tucked themselves away into corners, visions of the familiar home plucking at vitals and heart.

But there was delay in starting. The engine-driver was not in his cab, but on the platform, talking loud and long.

He was talking to the braided and striped officials who were sovereign princes in that station. He was daring to disagree with them.

“It’s impossible to start,” he was saying.

The word aroused the ire of the noble officials.

“Impossible! And a Frenchman dares to talk like that! Haven’t you heard, you pacifist son of a gun, that the word *impossible* isn’t French?”

The driver replied:

“The load’s too heavy.”

He explained to them, hoping perhaps that they were ignorant, that the line down which the train had to run was damnably uneven—curves, sharp inclines. To venture down it with too heavy a load was to risk losing control of the running engine.

One cannot ask of superior officials that they should be well informed. All the same, the big bosses knew what kind of a line it was—a sort of switchback running down through the Alps. But there was one question which came before all others. It was this: orders given by railway chiefs are sacred; no common sense arguments could over-

ride the ultimate argument that the order to start had been given.

In vain did the little black fellow gesticulate, shout the truth of matters, explain that the engine and carriages would perhaps go headlong off the rails. The chiefs, glittering beneath the platform lamps, kept saying: "You must start all the same."

The soldiers were already getting impatient; thrusting faces out of the doors and asking, like thwarted creatures: "Why don't we start?"

But the well-grounded fears of the driver were such that he refused to start.

His chiefs replied with formal orders. So he climbed into his cab and obeyed; the train moved off and left the station.

But soon, by the laws of things, the slope took complete charge. The train was indeed too heavy and not powerful enough to control speed as it should. Steam and driver alike were useless. The train was swept onward and downward. They were in the Arc Valley, where the line winds down along the edge of a rocky torrent.

Driven on faster and more and more furiously by their own weight, the chain of carriages tore down the mountain slopes. Steam was reversed, but the long vertebrate mass glided faster even so, and faster. It rushed down the slope, fast at first, then at express speed, then like a hurtling demon.

Human strength was powerless now to stop this

chain of carriages which was plunging down to the depths. With a terrific rattle and roar, in streams of smoke—for the driver had jammed on the brakes and they had no hold on the iron monster—five thousand hundredweight of iron and twenty-four hundred stone of living flesh—but in braking he had set fire to the underwork of the carriages.

The black-cabined tempest broke out into sparks, then into streams of fire, and a headlong comet came darting down upon the station of St. Michel-de-Maurienne.

The men shut inside these cages of reddening metal and smoking wood, walled in too, one might say, by the incredible speed—the five hundred Piave survivors—guessed that they were racing on to death. Fists were unclenched to thrust open the doors slammed to by the cyclone whistling past. Many leapt out into the blackness of the night. Not one of these escaped, and their mangled bodies festooned the line down to the place where mathematical certainty awaited this death-load, running to destruction down the mountain side.

This predestined place was on a sharp curve, where the line runs over a bridge, not far from St. Michel station.

The solidified hurricane, this meteor with a human core, dropped to earth here like a spent shell, continued its straight line over the curve, left the rails. The engine suddenly rolled over on to its

side. The carriages hurled themselves into it one after another, leaped into the air, tumbled down the rocky river slope below, piled themselves up, till they reached the bridge's parapet. The whole train had suddenly reared up like a monster on its tail. This pyramid so suddenly formed out of the wrecked carcass of the train was instantaneously wrapped in flame and transformed into a gigantic bonfire.

Cries were not heard for long from that bonfire. From the ruins blazing in the darkness, a hundred and fifty wounded—some very seriously wounded indeed—were extricated. All the rest were burned to death; three hundred and fifty soldiers who were on their way home with hearts rejoicing to take a few days of rest before returning to a life of perdition.

Horrible accounts of the St. Michel-de-Maurienne "accident" appeared two days later in the papers. They were much relished by readers sitting in front of their fires in time of war, with toasting feet and comfortable hearts—as easy, in body and mind, as the railway officials who had told the driver to start against his will. *They* were not bothered for explanations, and since that day they have all been brilliantly promoted.

But we, who call things by their true names, will remember that accident.

VENGEANCE FROM ON HIGH

“So they mutinied, you say?”

“Yes. Several regiments. It was in the Soissons sector, in 1917.”

“And for what reason?”

“They were disloyal to their country. They said they were fed up with the war, that when all was said and done it was really the doing of cabinet ministers, of the governments, and the rich; they said that the band of Franco-German profiteers had only to fight it out amongst themselves—and all that sort of revolutionary rubbish.”

“What did they do?”

“They took their officers prisoners! That’s what they did, sir.”

“Did they knock them about?”

“No. But they shut them up in villages. Then they slit all the motor tyres. They even posted machine-guns to defend themselves. But they never used them. At last, they were surrounded, then disarmed. And then, two hundred and fifty were chosen out.”

“Why two hundred and fifty?”

“Well, you see, to have chosen more would have

made too many; and less would hardly have made enough. They took these two hundred and fifty, chosen by lot among the rest, and invited them up into some waiting motor lorries. Up they got, laughing a livery laugh. Then they were driven about all day."

"Driven about?"

"Yes, they were driven up and down and round about the neighbouring country; the idea was that they should lose all notion of their whereabouts. At evening, we stopped."

"We? So you were with them?"

"Of course I was—not with the two hundred and fifty; I was one of the escort.

"There they waited and waited. Hours passed. An officer said: 'We'd better get hold of their names—they'll be needed later on.' Then another of the officers, who understood men just like a story-writer, said, 'Let's have your names for a tot of rum to each man.' They gave their names, you bet; but they're still waiting for that tot of rum.

"When night fell they were led over flat land; every now and then, they had to step over a trench, full of men and bayonets. When we had no more trenches to cross, they were made to advance a bit further. 'Halt!' was the whispered order, and they were told to sit on the ground, all huddled up close together. 'Sit down,' were the words, 'close up tight, and mind you don't stir.' And then this order

was passed along from mouth to mouth, in low tones, 'Eyes front. Keep a sharp look-out.'

"The object of these last instructions was to prevent their seeing that their escorts were leaving them, crawling away very cautiously, quietly returning in the direction whence they had come.

"Silence and solitude settled down on this heap of humanity; two hundred and fifty pairs of eyes stared out towards the tangled skein of flashes from the never-failing guns.

"In the rear, they weren't long getting busy. Just a word down the 'phone. Our batteries received the order to alter range and concentrate on a group massed at such and such a range near the front lines. And it wasn't hard to see; a rocket soared gracefully to indicate the exact position.

"Two hundred and fifty men in the prime and vigour of life, that's not a thing to be sneezed at. But a few fiery streaks, like axe-strokes flashing downwards this way, a few dazzling shell-bursts crosswise that way, a few down-hailings fit to smash in house-roofs, and then, to finish it off, the regular leaden stream of the machine-gun cleaning up the forgotten places—and the heap of men was transformed into a hash of flesh, bones and cloth—arms they had none.

"Trust the officers to think it all out. With a wealth of precaution, they hedged the whole business round with secrecy and we, who had had a

hand in it, were all sworn to deathly silence. We swore to keep it dark and keep it we did, for as long as we had to: either you have a sense of honour, or else you've none."

This then was the deed—one only of a hundred such, for they will never all be known—coolly perpetrated by French officers. Such are the exploits of the brutes who commanded us, and doubtless will be there in plenty to command us again, when the day comes. The bestial savagery of an Attila and a Tamerlane has kept pace with centuries of progress! The perfecting of machinery was not enough; hypocrisy, cowardice and bestiality have been perfected, too.

I had long known of this crime. A friend had heard the authentic account and passed it on to me with plentiful details as to how and by whom it was revealed; but he had also asked me not to say a word about it at that particular moment. The moment coincided with the general elections of May, 1924. Some of the politicians had been informed of the occurrence. They spouted flames of wrath. But they were up for election and had other things to think about. With difficulty, then, they restrained their indignation, 'but only,' said they, 'to strike the harder later on: if only they won their seats,' they explained, 'we should see!' They did win their seats, and we saw . . . that men in

parliament and men up for election are not the same thing. One and all (some day I shall give their names), they let drop this awkward business, involving questions of responsibility and inculpation of the highly placed. In fact, our parliamentarians kept mum on the one subject where silence was to be deprecated. And once this helpful electoral effort was a thing of the past, nothing ever disturbed this gruesome business in its grave.

And that is why I have stepped into the place of all these honourable men to-day, to speak of an affair which brooks no silence. This, too, I would especially say: our army executioners and democratic puppets have no more true and faithful abettors than *You*, O "honest folk." *You*, O "worthy citizens"—you that never lift a finger, but sit and cry Amen.

THEIR HEADS UNBOWED

WHAT wild and rapid film scenes can be disentangled from the chaos of our recent history, sifted and sorted out into epic sequence! One of these dramas stands out in lurid red against the background of the Great War; it is an epic that sings the power of human conscience and will. And ever since the day that I befriended some of the actors in that story who survived their parts, a mute reproachful vision haunts my mind.

First upon the curtain—a curtain that means the world—let us show the master scene. Behold a gathering of men in uniform. This is the *Meeting of those condemned to die*. It begins at eight in the morning, and ends with the stroke of ten. Fate itself has fixed that hour, and no official edict. At ten, all will be over.

The throng of soldiers bristles with red flags. When they marched to the meeting-place, the flags they bore in their hands were like sails, blowing them on. The speakers harangue under the open sky; every speech ends in the same way: "This and this only we want, to return to Russia. We want to go back to the Land of Revolution." Another

voice says: "There are eleven thousand of us." One milder voice suggests: "Better give way, give in." "No!" they answer him, with one single voice. "Far better die under the Red Flag!" cry one and all. The *Marseillaise* and the *Internationale* are sung. At five to ten, the meeting is over. The band plays a funeral march. From the horizon comes the sound of a whistling roar; then a volcano bursts forth in the earth at the feet of the men. Two bandsmen fall, fatally wounded. Those next to the gaps play on. Shapes of men are seen to fall in the smoke and writhe in agony. Flashes and thunder claps stream down from every quarter of the sky.

This field of blood lies in France, in the Creuse Department. These men are Russian soldiers. Their enemies, their conquerors, French and Russian soldiers.

And now, since we are hovering over the world, looking downward, let us fly back to begin the story at its beginning. Let us go far, far away and visit humble dwellings here and there in the wide lands of Russia—to a wooden *isba* in the province of Moscow; then to the Ukraine, to a peasant's cottage, with low roof and yellow walls, running round two sides of a little courtyard; to Armenia, or to Georgia, to one of the little houses looking like great flat paving-stones that nestle in to mountain sides or stony plateaux; or again, to one of the tumble-down hovels where the oil workers of Baku

were housed. Inside each one, peasants and workers, the poor, are talking. On the wall hang the Tzar's portrait. They are talking of life, which is bitter and hard: all these men are toilers, humble and oppressed. They are bound to their work as with chains. Some seek consolation and relief from misery in the drunkard's troubled dreams. And now, behold! Their burden grows heavier yet. War has been declared by their masters. Misery and suffering will increase tenfold. Throughout that land, workers and peasants—underlings, perpetual slaves—bow down their heads.

And now, to other scenes. In the twinkling of an eye we are before a brightly-lighted palace, and enter in. Here are splendid galleries, marvellously designed; constellated chandeliers and golden stalactites fill the chambers. A long green-covered table stands in the centre of one. Diplomats in conference. The Frenchman says to the Russian: "Russian troops for France are imperative. The war is dragging on. We need fresh throngs of young men. We have called up the niggers, but that is not enough. We must have Russians too. France has lent money to Russia and loans are not made for love." This, almost word for word, is what M. Paleologue said to M. Sazonov, the Tzar's Foreign Minister. The Russian grandees agree. They take pens, write down the sum total of the human

freight: Forty thousand Russian soldiers are to be exported monthly to the French line of battle.

Into the cottages and *isbas* and dens where the town workers dwell, comes a sudden ray of light and hope: volunteers are wanted to go to France! Perhaps a soldier son or father will go to France—France, the great republic, the pattern of all free countries; there no princes rule, and the people are their own masters. France has had her revolution. “We did what we could in 1905, but we failed; the rising met with the same fate everywhere—lines of soldiers shooting and sabring the masses.” Leave imperialist Russia for France! What a dream! Young men in town and country are stirred at the thought, and a light shines in the hearts of the long-coated soldiers, imprisoned, five men to one rifle, in barracks or billets.

Enrolling. Volunteers pour in. The best are chosen; the tallest and toughest and the wisest heads—those who can write and read, that means. Only fifteen per cent. of those who come up are chosen. And the rejected soldiers are as sadly disillusioned as men waking from lovely dreams. The chosen men make feverish preparations; in the new land there will be no striking the soldiers as in Russia, no flogging; each man will have a rifle. The volunteers are quite overcome by this new and incredible prospect.

The Voyage. Half the globe passes before their

eyes. The world's map visibly curves. Giant Russia; Siberia more gigantic still. The uniformed crowds are piled together like ants, jostled onto their transports. Some reach Marseilles *via* Siberia and Vladivostock. Others reach Brest *via* Archangel—points of arrival where troops of ours arrive as the transports come in? The Russian troops disembark in great style, set foot on the blessed soil of France. Psalms, orations. *Marseillaise*, full-throated. Crowds half-crazy. Cigarettes and chocolates for the soldiers; and women, in patriotic transports, kiss the handsomest looking.

First Misgivings. The war tramples them down. The general command decides to reinforce discipline, for when you're not soaring from victory to victory, it's the soldiers that are to blame. Military honours must be strictly rendered—more strictly than in peace time—and they transform the men into machine-made automatons. Corporal punishment, blows and floggings are reinstated, the reason given being that "Russian soldiers only understand knocks." And for the matter of that, they're not the only men to be treated thus, as their eyes can plainly tell them: the Senegalese, torn in numbers from their homes across the sea with the help of threats or golden promises, are trained and disciplined at the stick's end. One is reminded of beings in countless numbers—the greater part of the living race, in fact—cattle, horses, Senegalese

and soldiers; they are the tribes, in all creation, who only understand hard knocks. What of the sounds of the *Marseillaise*, still ringing in their ears; of man's charter, *les Droits de l'Homme*, before the mind's eye? Why, the one is only a sweet-sounding kind of wind, and the other a piece of writing on the screen set between the masses and their rulers. "The France of democracy, where is she?" comes the question; and the reply: "Goodness knows: not in France, to judge by the look of things."

The clouds thicken. A newspaper called *Nache Slovo* (Our-Word) read by Russian soldiers on the French front, protests against one or two abuses, not being at the rulers' beck and call. Some unrest is known to exist among the troops; a "bad spirit" is germinating. Headquarters are uneasy, annoyed. The general command, in agreement with the authorities, arranges to employ *agents provocateurs*; their work will allow them to take energetic measures. One of these *agents* is a man named Vining, a minion of the Russian Embassy. So this intrigue, in itself a fearful and vital episode in this great and fearful tragedy, leads up to the murder of Colonel Krause—stoned to death one evening by a band of hotheads or hirelings. More especially, it leads up to the repressive measures which were the end in view—the *Nache Slovo* is suppressed. A certain number of revolutionaries are expelled from

France (Trotzky among them). Eight men are shot, every one of them innocent of any share in the murder of Colonel Krause. The time of misgivings is over; the reign of terror and brutal oppression has already begun.

And then, as the Russian army realised the truth of matters, into the depths where recruiting sergeants' yarns and charms had plunged them, a great light came darting down: news of the February Revolution! Needless to say, the news was not publicly or officially announced to the men. In point of fact, everything was done to conceal it. At first only a few glimmerings reached the expeditionary force. One soldier reads the message over to himself while his fellows are communing with letters from home—pathetic letters that have slipped past the censor. An exclamation escapes him; he waves the paper, attracts attention. A knot of men gathers round: *The Revolution has come in Russia!* (Foolish of the censor!) An officer walks up, snatches the letter, tramples on it, white with passion. He walks off, thinks better of it, returns, picks up the battered letter and pockets it. He tries to explain to these men that it's all a newspaper scare. Scribblers who get their copy printed daily on news sheets are nothing but mountebanks, and a man must be crazy to believe what they say. And as this is more often the case than not (the soldiers have had some),

some feel doubtful. But the truth cuts through all the same, because it is harder and stronger than error and lies. It is the diamond in our universe. And at last each man knows that there's no Tzar left in Petrograd or Moscow. A deep yearning for freedom comes over one and all. Revolution brings enlightenment to these men dumped down on foreign soil. Heaven's gates stand open before their unhappy eyes.

Then comes a struggle: the officers striving to cover up or contort the meaning of the social upheaval in Tzarist Russia, and the men striving to find out the truth. At last the men come to a definite decision. This happens underground, in the cellar of some glassworks. Men of the 1st Regiment of the 1st Brigade have gathered there, as the result of an enquiry into the facts, and after meeting delegates from other regiments. All shout together: "We want to go back to Russia! We're doing no good here." The cry is taken up by the bulk of the Russian soldiers on the French front, and the wind of it directs, commands, lifts the entire movement into life. We can hear it howling and swirling across the trembling white cloth that receives the flickering imprint of our story. The men's decision is made known to Colonel Netchvolodov. But here was a soldier quite unaccustomed to hear his men express their wishes and talk in this

fashion. And what did he do but faint, when the deputation from his regiment informed him that the men wanted to be sent back home. He fell headlong and they picked him up.

The men's resolution: "We want to go back to Russia" spread through the Russian rank and file gathering life force. Then came the idea that they should be sent into action, to create a big diversion. It would be excellent in every way. For when a soldier goes into action he is forced to defend himself rifle in hand, and kill to avoid being killed; he has no time to think of anything else; he breaks off his Utopian dreams of freedom, whether he wants to or not. Moreover, battles have the same effect as lancing and bleeding; they draw out the poison festering in a fighting unit. Which is all to the advantage of those watching over the established order of things. Then again, the greater the number of grand attacks, the more the officers stand to gain. There are the decorations and promotions to be got out of it all, and the higher the officer stands in the scale of rank, the more his risks tend to disappear. It is an axiom—indeed, a platitude to say that in war time the advance of the rank and file into battle presupposes the advancement of their officers.

And that was why the 1st Brigade of the Russian Expeditionary Force was sent to attack Brimont

Fort. The Russians passed through twenty-six lines of barbed wire entanglements, occupied the villages encircling Fort Brimont. The fort itself they could not take; the French troops had not contributed their share by sending up reinforcements according to plan. Finally, the Russians had to retire, having achieved nothing but the loss of seventy per cent of their forces. Seventy per cent means more than two-thirds. Arrange side by side a heap of skulls and cracked heads and a bunch of undamaged heads which do not total a third of the stone-like or blood-stained heads, and you will have some idea what the figures mean. The survivors, after this punishment, were dispersed in the surrounding villages, so that their bad influence might not spread.

From then on, it was one long struggle between officers and men. From the soldiers, in gradually increasing numbers, more obstinate and less passive, the call for freedom came swelling: "We do not want to stay here; we want to go back to Russia where men fight at least for something human and just, the salvation of those who are sweated and oppressed!" Meanwhile the officers attempted by all manner of means—threats, prayers, blackmail, annoyances, brutality, provocation, intrigue—and with the connivance of the French authorities, to bring these regiments, alarmingly wide-awake,

back into the fold, and make them the blind slaves of the “Order” prescribed by capitalists, imperialists, executioners and parasites. But the soldiers organised and appointed their councils or soviets, strove to get into touch with the rest of the Russian regiments. The officers tried to thwart the movement, alter the working and divert the efforts of these councils. Tragedy and comedy intertwined. The French played their part, too. They had decided, after the February revolution, that the Russian troops fighting in France should no longer be subject to Russian, but to French laws. Now it happens that rights of citizens in arms are contrary to French laws.

As there were no means of getting the better of the steady determination of these volunteers who claimed the right to return home in view of the social upheaval, the 1st and 2nd Brigades were taken to a town in the Creuse Department called La Courtine and shut in there. The Russians held meetings among their camp huts to voice, with increasing determination and clearness, their one and plain desire. It sounded on the wind like some great, half-stifled cry, like the monotonous burden of a menacing prayer, and bound them yet closer in a body. They refused to give way on a single point. They were ordered to change the name Soviet into Council, and refused. On June 20th,

General Lokhovtzky ordered the men of both brigades encamped inside La Courtine to commence manœuvres. They refused.

More sweeping measures were tried. The men were divided into two sections. The aim was the fratricidal divorce of the 1st Brigade from the 2nd, which was more docile and responsive. Those who submitted unconditionally were moved to La Cournot Camp and to Felletin where they began beanfeasting, not without squabbles and scandals. Those who remained inflexible, pure in heart, were left at La Courtine and treated as mutineers. There were eleven thousand of them—an immovable mound, a man-mountain. The last insidious efforts were made; only a handful—a further seventy men—were weeded out. The remainder disciplined themselves, adopted strict and clean rules of life, allowed themselves no liberties, no excesses. They gave up alcohol. What a stirring contrast between those virtuous and upright rebels of La Courtine and the tamed slaves of La Cournot who celebrated their bondage with carousals!

Once more the Soviet of La Courtine asked the brass-hatted envoys of imperialism to send them back to Russia. They swore, they said, to do their duty as soldiers when on their native soil. A certain Vorkov came from Petrograd to preach passive obedience to them. The reply was the same. A Pope came to exhort them in melting tones: "Re-

pent ye and come to confession!" They shooed him away. "Kill us if you like," they said; "conquer us you cannot!"

We will only make passing mention of the swarm of outsiders at work—spies, informers, agents, each of them pulling their string and working their little devices in the story. The soldiers in La Courtine were like a square standing back to back, besieged on the battlefield, and refusing to surrender. "You have betrayed the honour of your calling," they told them. They replied: "We are the saviours of the dignity of our race." "You have misled us. You are traitors," they said. And they replied: "We have been misled. We are the pawns in a game of lies."

It is well to realise what lofty moral principles—in the fullest sense of the words—inspired this passive revolt, what deep searchings of conscience.

These Russian soldiers had been slow to act, had discussed the question up and down. And then, though the message of the Russian revolution had fired them and their hearts were won, they had not acted on impulse, nor even wildly. They had not shown themselves aggressive. Their weapon was non-resistance, and they accepted death—exactly like Gandhi's Hindus a few years later, when they offered their naked bodies to the British machine guns and bombs and bayonets.

Their standpoint was this: We have the right to choose for ourselves because the revolution has completely altered things in our own country. Our obligations no longer hold good, for we made them to men who lied to us scandalously and who have been pulled down; our former masters danced over an earthquake and were blown away by the wind. Our destiny has changed and our eyes have been opened, at one and the same time. We are not sold for all time, like cattle to butchers, because Nicholas II wanted Constantinople and, till he got it, French money too; because British imperialism wanted to keep the sovereignty of the seas and German imperialism wanted to win it; because the United States wanted to make money, like the iron-masters and cotton kings and all other all-powerful swindlers of the human race. We can no longer swallow that tremendous paradox, according to which the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm II was the only hungry nation roaring after its prey in the midst of the seraphic concert of Allied Powers. We have the right to cancel the bonds bartered with these souls and bodies of ours, and claim ourselves back for ourselves."

The officers' standpoint was this: The Revolution? Bravo! Long live Freedom! But we must carry on the war for the benefit of the English, French and Italian governments. If you ground arms, then in the first place you're cowards; in the

second, you'll be the death of your own revolution, furthermore the French gunners will send you below.

Like all healthy-minded men who want to understand and carry out their honest duty, the Russian soldiers had long discussed the question among themselves, as I have said. I know, for instance, that they debated what line of action to adopt at the time of the attack on Fort Brimont—because they were anxious to do the right thing, and not because they were afraid. And the proof lies in the words which closed their debate. Feeling in doubt and not knowing what to do, they said: "We'll go, and we'll do what our officers tell us to do." And off they went into that shambles in column of fours.

But now let us return, after this digression, to the palaces already familiar to us. The French authorities were frightened of these bold rebels who were now nothing but soldiers of the revolution. Such examples can be infectious: there were seventeen outbreaks of mutiny among the French troops. The serviceable masses had begun to swell out this capitalists' war and to feel they had enough of it. The time had come to reflect. The French authorities said to the Russian authorities: "Take the men back to your country, or else break them in, and we'll lend you a hand." But away in Russia, in a

sister palace, Kerensky felt still more frightened than the French of these soldiers with a Cause. This lord of revolution was always afraid of revolution. He was not anxious to see the revolutionaries back at home. He temporised, as his custom was, then, by way of reply, sent trustworthy reinforcements to the 2nd Brigade which was hostile to the 1st.

Supposing that one had been looking down that day—from an aeroplane, say—on the camp of La Courtine, one would have seen the encircling rings closing in under the orders of General Beliaev. First ring: three battalions, three machine-gun companies and four batteries—all that: Russian troops and French guns. Second circle: French troops; the 19th, 78th, 82nd and 105th line regiments with cavalry and artillery. On the 14th September a last ultimatum was sent by General Beliaev. It was rejected. Steps were taken to evacuate the civilian population from the village of La Courtine; round this the conscious storm, the pre-arranged disaster, could be seen concentrating.

It was at this stage that the Meeting of Those Condemned to Die took place, the scene which I cut out of its proper place to show you first of all. Let us quickly call back to mind the phases of that moving picture. Then, the bombardment began;

two bandsmen were wiped out, eight men. The enemy had dug trenches all round La Courtine. A systematic attack is launched against these eleven-thousand men who are without means of self-defence, who have sacrificed their lives, but not their cause. Five days the attack lasted, attended by all the horrors of war, including isolated murders by officers with no other motive than fury and sadism, including pillage, too. The last soldiers were attacked at the bayonet's point. Several hundreds were killed, more were wounded, eight hundred were missing. Out of eleven thousand, just a little over eight thousand were left. It is impossible to give exact numbers for the killed, because they were buried in secret at night, and all signs of their graves were concealed. To this day one may be walking over them unawares.

The rest of them were heaped up, in cargo loads, in those dark, unhealthy, reeking dens called transport hulls, to be despatched to Africa.

While this was happening, more Russian soldiers were at Salonica. And they went through a tragedy similar to the one on the French front. But *their* fate was due to the October revolution, the second, the real revolution. For this was not the revolution which overthrew the old order of things, but the revolution which built a new order upon the ruins of the old. These Russians also declared: "We are

tired of obeying orders from Tzarists in France or neo-Tzarists in Russia. We will no longer stain our hands in this war of the golden calves and nigger-drivers. Our duty lies at home, in our country, in the final war of liberation." They suffered every hardship, every privation. They were tortured; attempts were made to make them die of thirst, to kill them off one by one. But for all that, they did not give in, and the survivors went to rejoin their unyielding brothers in Africa.

In Africa. They melted down. They were dragged from camp to camp, from inferno to inferno. Every living day was a sorrowful station in the passion of these exiled revolutionaries. But if the scenes about them had changed one thing remained unchanged: their resolve. Henceforth they would not bow to old Imperialism, but serve the new-born Russia.

At last, after many comings and goings, after many fierce campaigns, and in spite of the grave consequences involved in a decision of such vast importance—at last it was decided, in high places, to send these Russian soldiers home. But their return, which might have been thought to end their tribulation, was only the beginning of another. For they were sent back to Russia to be enrolled in the army of that white outlaw, Denikin, who was paid and equipped by France and England to shatter the

Government of the peasants and workers. But "No!" they said; "we will not." Then they were decimated; scenes yet more horrible and more ferocious marked this stage in that living tragedy. Their numbers visibly dwindled away. And how many times over was that scene re-enacted—men concealing the traces of freshly-made graves! Their numbers dwindled away . . . Never mind; to the last they were as one single man.

But now historical events intervened in the dark story and made the great amendment. Denikin was beaten by the revolution. The workers of Toula set up such furious barriers that Denikin recoiled, fled to the shores of the Black Sea, and farther than that, to Paris.

And now at last the little throng of Russian soldiers have triumphed over events. At last they have become true soldiers of the revolution. They have encompassed that definite thing which they saw in their dreams when they refused to serve the ends of those who massacre the people. Their unshakable determination at last has won the right. Never, in all the history of mankind, was promise more splendidly kept by a band of men both greater and more human than their fellows.

These simple hearts—some of them are personally known to me—on their first encounter, with unerring judgment, rejected the pseudo-democracy

of Western Europe with all its hypocritical middle-class Tzarism and its paper-made freedom. From the first, they hurled back the *Marseillaise* into the faces of the abettors and organisers of the Great International game of plunder. In their bloody trek across the inferno of the Old World, in their quest of the ideal, they were fighting on behalf of all races upon earth by the might of their will, their hearts and their bodies. They strove with all their strength, began the great work that lies before men, sharply turning their backs on the cheap-jacks of Civilisation, of Right, of Moral Progress and Republicanism, who jibber and jig on the Parliamentary stage and in the Music-Hall at Geneva.

PART II

THE WHITE TERROR

THE UNTAMABLE

I KNOW what happens in Rumanian prisons, those living cemeteries. I went to Rumania purposely to find out. I have talked with prisoners, had letters from them; in Rumania and elsewhere, I have talked with men who have got away from those up-to-date caverns in Doftana, Jilava, Vacaresti, etc., where political prisoners, convicted or detained on suspicion of Bolshevism, are killed by slow degrees.

Countless facts, patent, undeniable, throng round me, clamouring with a voice like the voice of remorse.

And on one of these I would like to shed a little light to-day—on one man, one case.

G. Boujor was a Rumanian lawyer who had expressed sympathy with Russia. In particular—and this was the greatest crime laid to his charge—he had been Rakovsky's secretary. He had protested against the annexation of Bessarabia, of which the least that one can say is that it constitutes an act of international robbery perhaps without precedent, a bare-faced challenge to the right of peoples to govern themselves.

For six years now, Boujor has been shut up in Doftana prison. For six long years, perpetually loaded with chains, he has been confined in a diminutive cell, containing the bed where he crouches, hands and feet held down by iron loads. There he eats and there he sleeps. Within hand's reach, a pan. This is the only furniture in a cell which he has not once quitted in seventy-four months.

Absolute secrecy hems him round, seals him hermetically in. He is not only forbidden to receive any visits; from the very first day he has seen no human face, heard no human voice. He is forbidden to read and write. Nor would it be possible, for he is in complete darkness. No light in this bare-sided safe. He is lucky if he sees the arm of the gaoler who draws back the heavy sliding door of the dungeon, once in every twenty-four hours, to pass through a grating, and lay down near him, a revolting mess of soup.

At first, urged desperately by human instinct, he sought to speak with this gaoler, hear the sound of his voice. In vain. The orders of the Rumanian oligarchy are that no one must ever speak to Boujor.

It was in vain, too, that steps have been taken to obtain some alleviation of this fearful torture which changes a human being into a corpse, and consigns him, yet living, to the tomb. The

Rumanian oligarchy has always refused to do anything to lighten this vengeful retribution. In spite of the representations of Soviet Russia, Rumania has never consented to exchange Boujor for other prisoners.

Still, there was one day when Boujor was seen, was spoken to, and when he answered.

Rumour had come that he was dead; then a fresh rumour: he had gone mad. With my own eyes I read the tragic letter written by an old prisoner in Doftana, telling how, in the night—sometimes, when the weather was calm—the dull sound of tunes and chantings could be heard, suspiring out of the ground; it was Boujor.

A young working woman, by name Lénutza Filipovici, determined to risk everything to get through to him and find out what had become of him.

A chance happening gave her an excuse. During the political trial known as the trial of the Three Hundred, the Public Prosecutor had declared that Lénutza, who was eighteen, had been Boujor's mistress. This was a lie, but the young woman tried to turn it to account. She went straight to the high official in the Rumanian police who was responsible for the suppression of Communists—that sinister figure Ranciulescu, "Chief of the Communist Brigade."

She said to him, "They say that Boujor is dead."

"That's not true," replied Ranciulescu; "he's alive."

Lénutza bravely put forward her plea, "You know that he was my lover. I should like to make sure if he's still alive."

The official turned his back on her, because he had special orders to allow this prisoner no contact with the living.

Lénutza pressed her case desperately. With threatening voice, she talked of creating a public scandal; then, she tried imploring, and knelt and wept before the monster. The incredible happened. After long hesitation, yielding to some reason or other (not pity, in any case), the high official changed front. He blurted out, "You shall see him, devil take you! and talk with him for three minutes."

Holding the paper which opened locks and bolts for a few moments, she walked down a long dark passage where the walls shed an icy wind. In this endless passage, the gaoler stopped, the key ground in the lock, the heavy dungeon door slid back, disclosing iron bars. Through these bars, at last her eyes could see. His clothes were torn, his beard had grown. He was crouching on his wooden bed, and the first thing that Lénutza noticed was that the faint light let into the cell from the dark passage by the opening door had dazzled him like the sun.

The prisoner's face wore a wild look. Clearly, this was no longer a normal man; six years of torture in darkness had shattered his mind. On an impulse, Lénutza held out her hand to him through the bars, but she was drawn violently back by the gaoler. For some moments she stood there, unable to speak or cry.

At last, however, she spoke:

"Comrade Boujor, I have come to greet you in the name of our friends."

At the sound of this voice, it was as though a disruption had taken place within the prisoner, in the inner mind. A flash of clear light went through him and he, too, spoke—in a voice that was weak and dying, but quite distinct. And what he expressed was the one great thought that had beset him through months and years in the midst of the deathlike ignorance that walled him in. He did not speak of himself, he did not speak of friends or of kinsmen. He spoke of the one capital thing. All that he said was:

"In Russia, are the Bolsheviks still strong?"

"Yes!" she cried.

But the warder interrupted roughly:

"No politics, you know!"

Silence.

At last, she asked, "Is there nothing you want, Comrade Boujor?"

"No," said he; "but I am happy now."

They said goodbye to one another, and she went away, taking with her the books and the food that she had hoped she could give him. She could not over-ride the prevailing law: Boujor was forbidden to receive anything whatsoever from anyone.

These things happened not so long ago. And not only do they shed a blinding light on the barbarity of those now ruling over great nations with the connivance or consent of other potentates; they also give us a glimpse of that iron resolve which lives on in the hearts of the victims, even those who have been most mutilated, most beaten, down in the depths that crass "public opinion" would rather leave unguessed.

Stronger than all torture, stronger than sickness, stronger than madness, faith endures and is fostered in the only free race in the world, in its ultimate ideals.

And this faith is the most terrifying of all explosives.

June, 1926.

JON GRECEA'S CONVERSION

JON GRECEA was an untaught peasant. He knew nothing of the great social problems, nothing of what went on outside the little patch in Rumania where he lived and toiled. His parents and his parents' parents, from times immemorial, had always worked on the estates of the Boyards. And from times immemorial he thought that, like the lands, he was owned by the Boyards.

When Grecea reached conscript age, he became a marine in the navy. It was war-time. But he did not know what war meant. He only knew that tiny part of it which concerned him directly. He obeyed the orders he was given, he did what he was told to do. At the command of others, and for ends that that he did not know, he handled a rifle just as in former days he handled the plough and the hoe. And little progress did his education make in those gloomy days when he was compelled, like his peasant brothers in uniform, to drill, to try to kill, and try, as well as he could, to avoid being killed!

One day a workman came up to him, handed him a bundle of leaflets and asked him to distribute

them among his fellow sailors on the ship. Grecea did as he was asked, without knowing what was written on the sheets, because he could not read and had not learned to be inquisitive.

On these sheets was printed an appeal to the marines, "Brothers, soldiers of the navy! Comrades in uniform, don't fire on your brothers in the red army, if the Boyards of Rumania send you to fight against the Soviets of Russia, for Russia is the only country in all the world where the people govern themselves!"

These tracts, passing from hand to hand, were discovered by the authorities. Grecea was arrested. Like all political suspects, he was flogged till he bled, and tortured. For a year and a half, he underwent detention in prison, and much brutality. After that he was brought before a court-martial.

Before the military court, Grecea spoke of his childhood and youth. He told what his life had been up to the day when he put on uniform. He explained that till that day he had worked like a beast of burden, as his own people had worked around him or had worked before him, to the end, as he said, that "our sweat should turn to gold." He explained how he had thought that the labour to which he had so far given all his working life was a law of life; that there was a mighty decree whereby he was chosen, so that the sweat of his brow might bring in gold to those who reap golden har-

vests on earth. He had never thought, any more than his father and mother, or his brothers and sisters, of questioning this great law.

Then he spoke to the presiding officers about the manifestoes; he did not know at the time what he was doing. Not only was he unable to read what was printed on the pamphlets which he had agreed to distribute, but he had not even—such the cloud of passive obedience which had always hung over him—tried to find out.

Socialism and Communism in those days were like words in a foreign tongue, utterly beyond him. He was not even sure that he had heard them mentioned as yet. Grecea then explained that in prison he had been with men “who are called Communists.” These brothers in chains had taught him the meaning of the cause which he had worked for in innocence. They told him of the worker’s lot, of the monstrous folly and injustice of a social order which turns the army of productive workers into a sort of cattle, owned by a handful of rich scattered among the crowd. They had made him see that Communism would mean the end of these barbarous conditions, the dawn of liberty, of light, of life, for a host of downtrodden slaves.

“Judges of the court,” said this little peasant called Grecea, “I have told you what kind of man I used to be. But now I am a changed man. And while I suffered I have learned the meaning of

these things to which I never gave a thought, and at last I have become a man indeed."

It would have been so easy for him to have avoided sentence by pleading the obvious defence that he was an involuntary agent at the time of committing the act laid to his charge. But here he was, standing before the military tribunal, boldly inculpating himself on a fresh count. This simple peasant deliberately called down condign punishment upon his head, and, like an apostle, he cried, "Communism is a glorious thing, and if God had ordered the things of this world, that is the Order He would have willed and none other."

Let us record in all piety the actual words that Jon Grecea boldly uttered in that court, knowing that they would pass over the judges' heads and find their way into the hearts of the throng of his fellows:

"Every son of the people of Rumania, every peasant and workman, every soldier and labourer, all who win honest bread, must come together and join the Rumanian Communist Party, must strike down the vampires, and proclaim the new government by the people!"

He was condemned to five years' detention in a house of correction. But when I spoke just now of 'condign punishment' I did not use the words inadvisedly. In Rumania, where the death penalty

is abolished, there are several ways of reinforcing it behind the official seat of Justice.

When M. Bratianu, the prime minister, was informed of the words spoken by Jon Grecea before the court-martial, he was seized with great fury. And, of course, to please him, they tried to do away with Jon Grecea by the stock device—"attempt at escape." The success of this method is well known; the prisoner is simply taken out of his cell and shot in the back out in the fields. Then it is explained that he had attempted to escape.

For once, however, the trick was tried and failed. Then they tried poisoning Grecea. But by some extraordinary chance this failed too. The only thing left was a daily course of torture. They deprived him of food; they loaded his arms and feet with chains, and thrust him into that damp, constricted dug-out which is known as the *gherla*. There for some months he stayed, doubled in two.

Then he began hunger striking. This was exactly what his torturers hoped for; their only wish was to find the way to make him die. But the other prisoners all made common cause with him and hunger-struck too. The prison governor had to give way, especially as the news had got abroad and great bands of workmen and even a section of foreign opinion were shewing indignation. The governor then used promises to put an end to the

hunger strike and sent Grecea to the infirmary. The little building known as the *infirmeria* in Doftana prison is a kind of family vault; men have been known to enter it alive now and then, but no one has ever seen anything but corpses coming out. It is the custom of the prison doctor, indeed, to tell the prisoners as much, "with a frightful smile," as one witness told me. Grecea is not dead yet. But he has gone mad. This man who faced his blood-stained judges on a day, and loudly proclaimed before them the truth that he had evolved in his noble peasant mind, is now nothing but a restless phantom that trails his murdered reason about.

But even so, he was once a living voice, testifying to the growth of the Communist International on the face of the earth.

THE LION

“DID you know Todor?”

He put his hand down on the papers we had been reading together. We were in a café.

“Yes. He was a man.”

“What was he like?”

“He was a *man*. . . . I was a *comitadji* with Todor Panitza at one time: but he was a Voyevode. It was this way. We had been sent—a full *tcheta*—into the Drama district, by the Pirine Congress. This was in 1904. Drama—you might guess it—was the dirtiest district in Macedonia: Turkish oppression, Greek propaganda, big landowners all for the Greeks and traitors at that, and a network of spies everywhere. All this on top of the poverty-stricken peasants’ shoulders. To cheer us up, the chaps said, “When you’re back, we’ll come to meet you, but you won’t come back any more!”

“We had two years of it, my boy. Not bad for a band of *comitadjis*, eh? And all because the Voyevode was a proper man. He began by spreading a nice little panic among the tyrants and traitors and spies—gave them a nasty knock or two. The Kam-burovs, for instance; he wasn’t exactly soft with *them* (though even in that black family there were

some innocent ones whom he spared). When it came to Yanchuglu, they told him, "Go ahead, polish him off." But he preferred talking with him, quiet like—explained as how he hadn't taken on a job killing Turks and Greeks and Bulgarians; oh no! What he was after was to unite them against the Turkish oppression, being the friend of the long-suffering Macedonians. So Yanchuglu was won over to the side of the poor peasants; Oroomuglu too, Bolgurev too. Big nuts they were, all three of them, in Macedonia.

"He didn't go about killing right and left, old Todor. A lion, that's what he was, not a cannibal. Domir Aga, for instance, the high and mighty bey of Karliakova, he *would not* put him to death, for all the snivellings of the good old shepherds, 'Kill him,' they begged. And the reason he gave for sparing this worthless bit o' nothing was, 'He can improve himself in other ways than that.'

"I remember the day when, out in the fields, we fell right on top of a bunch of Turkish reapers from Bozdag. You should have seen their faces when they saw us stout lads popping up. Well, we gave them back their revolvers, even though they were Turkish reapers, and their bread, even though we were blasted hungry. Well, next day, some Turkish gendarmes happened to fall in with these same Turkish reapers, and took their revolvers from them, and their bread, and what's more, left

the marks of the butt-ends of their rifles all over them. Result: The reapers came in to swell our ranks, and got fiercer even than us on the good work.

"The ideas Todor used to hatch up in his head! You or I would never have dreamed of them. So it was he said to the peasants, 'Don't let the beys and the big landowners or the profiteers make money out of you! Hide the best of your harvest!' This they did. And so the crops could be bought by the peasants for a low price instead of being taken away by the rich plunderers; this trick actually ruined them and forced them to sell their lands to the peasants.

"In fact, if you want the right word for it, he was educating them. When he nabbed anyone and had them up against a corner, he used to talk to them: 'You', he'd say, 'you don't know any better; you're just a fool. We'll let you live. But you, you're book learned, yet you plunder and profiteer: you're going to get it hot.'

"And so at last, folks said, 'So that's what they are, eh, these *comitadjis*, these so-called robbers?'

"'Yes,' we said, 'that's what we are.'

"This man, who comforted the oppressed and made tyrants tremble, sold all he had to buy arms and medicines for his companions, and for twenty years he gave himself up, body and soul, to the cause of the revolutionaries of Macedonia.

"Todor Panitza was the life and soul of the independent movement in Macedonia. This is well known, but can't too often be repeated. He was the god that inspired it. In the Serres province, and all over the place, they called him the incarnation of their national freedom. But as everyone—you, for instance—knows, the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee, led by Alexandrov, Panitza and Protoguerov, split up into several groups; the Autonomists with Protoguerov at their head became the agents of the Bulgarian imperialist government.

"That's how it came about that Tchaoulev was assassinated at Milan, Raiko Daskalov at Prague, and Alexandrov himself was murdered by Protoguerov. So then, the Autonomists went about saying, 'We simply must kill Panitza.'

"Easy enough to say, no doubt. But how kill him, heavens above, how?

"True, his daring deeds outnumbered the hairs on his head, and his story was an extraordinary one. But he knew how to look after himself, and now, living at Vienna, he kept his eyes open pretty wide.

"A man like him, ready for everything that came, doubly quick through long practice, all nerves and muscle, in perfect trim, you couldn't go for him straight—it was madness to think of it. And play tricks with him! Why, you could no more do that than you could play tricks with a lion, a stronger

animal than you and, before that, more cunning.

"Well, among the shady crowd that hang round the Bulgarian legations and ministries, feeding on secret funds which come from the taxpayers' pockets, there was a piece called Mencia Karniciu. She was the daughter of a bankrupt money lender. This Karniciu woman was full of disease, and fuller still of ugliness; lean, pale, shrunk face; one of our chaps sized her up pretty neatly: 'Just like a big white monkey,' he said.

"Pots of money she got, and detailed instructions from the Viennese Legation; to be more precise from one Antonov, whose name we must prick up here, for conscience' sake.

"She got into Panizza's family circle, worked her way in on pity, which was the cleverest line to take with the mighty and invincible Voyevode.

"One day, she bought tickets for the theatre and said, 'I've been given tickets.'

"They all went: Panizza, his wife, a henchman that never left his side, and the she-assassin.

"She had taken a box at the Burg-theater.

"While they were doing Peer Gynt—you know, a musical play with a storm in it—the time came when the stage and the house were darkened. Gloom all of a sudden, with thunder and lightning flashes.

"You can guess how they were sitting in the box. Panizza here; his faithful companion beside

him. The woman, behind. She took the revolver out of her handbag. But for the storm scene she couldn't have done it. With her two first shots, she broke both arms of the henchman, fired again at Panitza, rose, escaped.

"While Panitza lay dying, the henchman kicked open the box-door, which had slammed to, with one mighty kick, and dashed after the Karniciu woman, both arms swinging useless. They caught her somewhere near the exits.

"You saw her yourself in court; a ghastly picture of disease and degradation; the band of secret agents and detectives round her, as she lay on the stretcher, nurses bustling about, playing their farce; full of venom and hypocrisy, acting the double part of the dying liberator who cannot stand—crammed with gold as she was by the diplomatic flunkeys of Tsankov, and soul far rattener than body."

When my companion had said his say, he showed me a paragraph in one of our big newspapers:

"Marcia Karniciu, sentenced to eight years' imprisonment at Vienna, has been released on account of ill-health. She had an enthusiastic reception in Bulgaria, and attended a great many meetings, where she was hailed as the Charlotte Corday of Bulgaria."

This is the way history is made and remade; this, too, the way it is written.

FERDINAND

THERE was once a young prince who was happy.

He was happy because, as I have said, he was young. And besides, he was handsome, and rich, and illustrious. He was indeed the king's nephew and heir-apparent, and every day the king covered himself with glory, just by sitting on the throne.

His aunt, the queen, had taken up literature, and proved to have genius. Such, at any rate, was the opinion of polite readers and of literary critics, who know what they are talking about.

But the young prince did not cultivate literature; he only sowed wild oats.

This was far more in accordance with ancestral tradition, and was by way of being a discreet lesson for his noble aunt.

Sowing oats was preferable, really, to politics: heir-apparents who go in for politics are always setting their august parents by the ears, as well as the stage managers and scene shifters of kingdoms, commonly known as ministers and diplomats.

There are noble pursuits for the mind, it will be said, useful activities. . . . Yes, but you must be

keen on them, and be a fanatic, after a fashion, to find them to your taste.

Our prince only cared for sowing wild oats. Now there are oats and oats. What he liked was the wildest kind of all.

For him, this meant fascinating young women and girls with his smiling face and lordly air, and then dropping them. He swore eternal love for a time to all kinds of poor creatures whose one possession was a youthful heart in a youthful body. He went out hunting women as other men go out hunting birds, and devoured them rapidly, thus enjoying the pleasures of the gourmet.

But he did not do his hunting among the ladies of the Court and upper classes alone. He had a taste for handsome lasses. He could stoop to conquer, and explore, incognito, the lower quarters of his capital for quarry. Haroun al Raschid did the same, so the *Arabian Nights* tells us, and often went out in some disguise into the streets of Bagdad to find out what his subjects were thinking of himself as their sultan. But our prince only talked to the women, and his curiosity was of a purely personal order.

And so he gathered many heart that faded ere long. In old times lords, especially of the highest rank, were quite open about these things. Today, they hush them up. And there you have democratic progress.

Now there was a beautiful young woman in a suburb of that town. His princely eye fell upon her, and so a fresh idyll sprang up out of the ruins of all the rest.

This time the adventure went on for a little—several days. The husband, a butcher by trade, had his suspicions, discovered the affair. Let it be said that the prince, being fond of heroic adventures, and knowing that he ran no risk himself, did not take many precautions.

The husband was an honest, hard-working man, fond of his wife, and realised that the stranger in his house could be nothing more than a vulgar thief. The moment comes: out he rushes like a tiger, ready to give the fine young fellow a thrashing.

And a nasty time he would have had, if he had not been a prince. You can guess the scene: the four walls of a modest room, the unfortunate wife lying in a corner, hands over her eyes, and the simple, menacing figure, like the avenging arm of the law.

But as we know, the flesh and blood of Royal Highness is far too precious to be left to its own devices; it might get damaged in some accident. Two discreet and broad-backed persons—watch-dogs in morning coats—were following their master like his shadow, or nearly so. The two of them were always there, a few yards off, on the lookout in the

street, not far from the door, ears strained, always ready to save the face of the ruling dynasty should complications set in.

One of them, having heard loud voices, thrust in the door with his shoulder, just as if it had been a curtain; both men burst into the room and seized the working man in their clutches.

When the two myrmidons had hitched up their man and held him fast, the prince, quickly recovering from his momentary pallor, took out a cigar, lit it, and laughed in his face.

The bellowing of the fellow, fast in the grip of the plain-clothes men, amused him.

They amused him for a time; then the home truths which the fellow spat out frothingly into his face began to sting him in his princely sense of honour.

He took the cigar from his mouth and set the lighted end to the nose of the working man transfixed before him—kept it there, long and firmly—while the two Hercules held him, motionless and harmless, through all his yells.

And then the prince went calmly back to his heir-apparent's palace.

This young prince's name was Ferdinand. His name is still the same. But he is no longer young now, nor a prince. He is King of Rumania.¹

¹ Since this was written, Ferdinand von Hohenzollern, King of Rumania, has died.

THE WORST TORTURE OF ALL

“THE Chains,” said Catareou, coming back to Rumanian prisons for the last time; “there’s nothing more awful than that. What a weight, what a clatter, what cold! Twenty-five pounds of icy iron. A clinging monster that draws the last of your strength while you drag it along with yourself. Lie still, and the weight binds you down; get up and walk, and it bites into you at every step.

“As a rule, your chains are invisible, for you live in underground corridors and cells, where night is night and day is gloom. But there are times—when they’re transferring you or fetching you up before the judge or the prison governor—when you see those chains of yours for a few moments, see the black-linked monster which shares in your life, coils round your bones underneath the flesh, grips you at ankles and wrists with fourfold jaws.

“Though I left my chains behind me, they’re living yet, I know.”

And he pointed through the wall to a spot in space where the Rumanian frontiers lay (four other faces turned in a flash to the same point of the compass). Again he saw those chains, living on, with another body now in their embrace. His

face, radiant with the thought of freedom but a moment before, clouded over; tough though he was, this man who had spat in the face of a warden once when he was prodding his nails with a knife, he was within an ace of breaking down and crying like a child.

It was not so very far across that frontier; all this had happened not so very long ago. For we were in Turkey; these five men had escaped from the Rumanian prisons and now were bound for Russia.

As is the habit of men fresh from nightmares they were recalling odd snatches of their nightmare from which they had so miraculously escaped. And as we sat there, in Eridneh Capou's little wooden house, the scene was reminiscent of those village evenings when each man tells a hair-raising tale, calls up a ghost in his turn.

I listened. I knew that what these escaped prisoners were saying was true. So I listened and stored up their words, to remember the things that were done in the Europe of 1926, and declare them.

“Yes,” said Spiridon. “But there’s worse than that.”

The Cage.

“The cage—a kind of clockwork case, as Basile Spiru said. They shove you in standing upright. But a clock at least can swing its pendulum, while

you can't so much as stir a finger and you're wedged inside like a wooden soldier standing to arms. It's a cell and a straitjacket too, a coffin and a cuirass."

We had heard of that cage before, but Spiridon's description made it live again; his words seemed to quiver out of his very flesh till we felt we were in that cage, that our bodies were constrained.

"Ten days they keep you there. The food you get is water and a bit of maize bread; sometimes nothing at all—starvation. After three days your legs begin to swell, and the swelling creeps upward. Then your chains break through the skin and eat into your flesh. Sometimes, after a day's rest—when you drop to the ground like a broken China—they put you back for ten days more; that's what happened several times over to Max Goldstein. He was a tough 'un, if you like; had to make tremendous efforts before he could die!"

"And what about the *Gherla*?" said Jon. "The *Gherla*, my boy! A hole hollowed out in the rock. If you were to stand up in it, your head and shoulders would be sticking out. But you've got to disappear in it, so that there's nothing visible over the top. For that, you must squat inside like a toad. So they make you fast, press you, forge you with chains fixed to the sides, until you block up the hole nicely.

"There you stay, for three to twelve months, and

three times a week only you get a filthy allowance of maggots and beans. Sometimes too, they pour water into the hole, but they don't fill it up to the top, because then you'd be drowned and would suffer no more.

"When I looked at myself in the glass—after coming back to the upper world, I saw an old man there," said Jon; "I looked like one of my father's poorer brothers.

"Now see here," were his final words, addressed to us all, "I don't like being contradicted. Very well then; if there's anyone ready to call out: 'You're a dirty liar!' and tell me why, I'll be downright pleased!"

But it was Virgil who now broke silence to continue the ghastly tale:

"There's worse than that—worse than hammering your bones, worse than the bits of flesh they tear and clip off you, only just stopping in time to prevent your dying (for out there, you know, they have several dodges for killing you off simultaneously).

"There's Disease; they shove it into your body."

"The cage and the *gherla* both guarantee you consumption," said Spiridon and Jon.

"Yes, but I'm talking of disease dealt out to you straight, like the bastinado. I'll tell you about one disease—*typhus exanthematicus*, to give it its true and horrible name. That's another of their dodges

for breaking the spirit of political prisoners in Rumania. Only this one can't be seen, and it gets in everywhere.

"There's one prison absolutely steeped in this disease—soaked with it—Galata. For the matter of that, the *bourgeois* newspapers said it was. Now, when you're a *bourgeois* paper and say that, then it's a thing you can't hush up. Galata reeks, sweats, showers down typhus. It lurks there, under the top skin of the floor, under the skin of the walls, in the dirt round the doors, even in the spines of the columns and pillars.

"The prisoners with typhus mix, of course, with the others. The lice, gorged with their blood, have nothing left to do when their patron is put underground, for they only like hot meals; so they apply to the survivors.

"Got the idea? See how they get round the law abolishing the death penalty! Lice? Microbe carriers? What do you expect them to do about it? So, all of a sudden, you find you're thick with them; your skin's like a newspaper sheet with the printed letters all running about.

"There was one-eyed Simeon; for three weeks he lay alongside of us unconscious. He tossed about weirdly, and raved from dawn till evening and from night till dawn.

"'Pooh!' said the doctor. 'Stomach convulsions; a trifle, a trifle.'

"And they gave him camomile and purgative mixture.

"But we—there were twenty-five of us prisoners shut up in the same cell with him—we knew well enough what it was, thanks to the hours and hours we spent watching this bundle of rags kept tossing and groaning by the last of his clockworks inside, and lying on a mattress like a dung heap—for you can bet they never changed his clothes, still more that they never carried him to the pan. The stench that hung around him was so thick that you felt you were touching it with your hands.

"A week after that someone took on himself to say to the chief warder: 'What about giving Simeon a bath?'

"The chief warder's face went as red as a volcano.

"'A bath!' yelled back his lordship. 'He's come through five years without baths. And there are others in this prison who've got on fine without one bath in seven years!' he bawled. 'And anyway, what business is that of yours?'

"You see the odds we were up against: dressed in rags left to us by prisoners gone underground, our only food cold *polenta*, tepid soup made with rotten beans, and a little hot water called tea, never washed, no sick attendant, a doctor who didn't want to be doctor, bitten by poisonous vermin, tumbling over one another,—and the game was how to escape this deadly infection.

“Sometimes we hoped: dreams as wild as that come to men sometimes!

“But mostly we were afraid. Every day our teeth chattered louder; we felt the death-hold in our stomachs, and the smell of Simeon’s couch hung about us like Death itself.

“One night Simeon died.

“On the next day, they made us take off our clothes to hang them in the steam from a boiler. What could this whiff of steam do when it would have taken fire and floods to clean out that one prison cell!

“And now the warders and entire prison staff stopped visiting us. They kept clear—vamoosed! The work was done by soldiers, who are good for any job, as you know.

“But it was we prisoners who took Simeon out of his bed. They made us drunk—a bright idea; we floured him in lime, then buried him.

“And then, that very same day, this was what happened: one after another, Vasili, robber, Fedor, pickpocket, and Wasja, political,—fell ill.

“Nobody troubled about them. Our masters, as I’ve said, were invisible now. They sat tight and waited, at the far end of their web—the prison spiders.

“The three men struck down grew rapidly worse. And now, in the cell, there was delirium threefold; they began calling out. From the mouth of each one came some vital scrap of his earthly story.

Wasja, who had been sentenced because an official wanted to steal his field from him and he resisted (they call that politics, and perhaps they're not so very far wrong) yelled at the top of his voice: 'A man's rights are his rights!' Vasili thought he was surrounded by gendarmes and struggled, shouting aloud and calling on the robber god to lend him a hand. As for Fedor the pickpocket, he volleyed down curses on the head of the police commissioner with whom he thought he was sharing out spoils (as was his wont, and after the manner of many of his kind in Rumania) and by whom he had been swindled of his fair share. (It was the division of the booty, not the taking of the booty, which had landed him in prison.)

"Then their cries quietened down, as well they might; for at the end of the sixth day, all three were in lime, and three white lumps were laid in the earth.

"And the rest of us waited and waited, eating our heads off with fear, for the sentence to be pronounced inside us.

"At that time there were sixteen other typhus cases in various cells at Galata. Spiru told me this and he only talks of what he's seen or what he knows for sure.

"An old white-haired peasant, with eyes fixed ahead, was watching the days slowly, slowly dwindling—eighteen more and he would be out

of prison. Not a long time, eighteen days, but all the same there wasn't much time to lose. . . . Soon he had only had three days left. Two days before his time was up, they lowered him down into the white mush that burns to the bone.

"Mr. Constantine Cernat, prison governor, Governor General of Prisons in greater Rumania, was on his way back from his estates in Bessarabia when he was informed of the spread of the typhus epidemic which he had long known of.

"He got quite worked up: 'This is becoming serious!' he said and dropped everything to hurry off a telegram to Galata, containing these simple words:

"'Until further orders, no Galata prisoners to work on my lands.'

"For he knew that precautions must be taken against any spread of infection."

Theodor in his turn took up the tale, to tell us of yet worse memories, locked up in his ex-prisoner's head. He began his story in different fashion:

"We fellows were in Jilava, being beaten, maltreated and driven, step by step, like the rest towards the charnel-house and the cemetery. But what made us miserable, more than tortures and filth, was the thought in our heads: 'The Cause is

done for'—those were the words we said to ourselves.

"‘Our voices have been silenced—and all the other voices outside,’ we said. For when you can’t hear anything you think there is dead silence. And there we were; sentenced for five years, ten years, or more. In other words (spades must be called spades), condemned to death. For had not the revolution, which would have brought salvation to the poor, been locked up in prison with us and condemned to death? Was it so? All our efforts, all our stubborn labour, love of wife and children, hopes of a share in the earthly paradise deliberately cast aside, and all, all our sufferings gone for nothing!

“That’s what we were saying, each one to himself, for to talk amongst ourselves, even of trifles, wasn’t to be thought of. And as for solemn thoughts like that, well, you can guess! Never mind, we were all thinking the same, as we’ve discovered since then.

“In one word, the flame inside us was dying down. We were sinking to the level of suffering beasts. Pretty well all that we thought of now, was the prison diet and our treatment.

“Then we started the hunger strike, automatically almost. In other words, we had had enough of it, and now we took to saying so, out loud. After all, nothing could be worse than our condition at the

time. And if we had to chuck up the sponge, better chuck it up of our own free will than by theirs; at least we could rob them of *that* satisfaction.

"Eighty of us together, for a week at a stretch, began refusing the scum and skim which keeps Rumanian prisoners from dying of starvation, stuff which makes your stomach turn against its hungry self at meal-time, until you only feed yourself by sheer force of will.

"Well, this hunger-strike succeeded.

"It was surprising how it succeeded. Raschkanu, the war minister, granted more than anyone dared hope for. We were allowed all sorts of extravagant privileges: a short turn in the yard, government newspapers to read, no more stick, no more cage without good cause. . . .

"'This is too good to last,' said some.

"But others said: 'They've had a fright. Besides, who can tell, perhaps the working classes have grown strong out in the world, on top! . . .'

"During April, the governor called us together and made a speech.

"'The 1st of May,' he said, 'will be Easter for our holy mother the orthodox church. You shall have meat and cakes and wine.'

"And he added this bit of news: 'Christ is arisen!'

"'Many thanks,' some voices said, snarling, ready to spit, like.

"He couldn't have heard, for he went on:

"That is not all. The 1st of May is Labour Day too. You can celebrate your feast as you like. You are free to arrange the ceremonies to please yourselves. On the 1st of May you can talk and sing all day long, as much as you like!"

"The man who said all this was quite the smartest most up-to-date thing in prison warders; his name was Commander Arghir, and once you've mentioned his name, no more need be said.

"So these words of his were very queer. What was still queerer was that they came true. We were allowed to arrange our own celebrations for May Day, just as if we had been in our own homes, or better still, in a free country.

"So, on the 1st of May, there were revolutionary songs at Jilava. We had pow-wows. Just like a regular meeting, my boy. We appointed a committee and stewards, and the orators spoke against capitalism and explained the meaning of May Day to an audience of political prisoners gathered in the prison yard. Of course there were a few pick-pockets or common murderers who slipped in among the audience. But after all, that was no worse than *Siguranza* agents who slip into political meetings; and then again, talking of common law, it would be quite worth calculating how often the Social Order itself deserved to come up before a real judge and be punished as guilty party.

"There was a motion, carried unanimously, and

to finish up we sang the *Internationale*. And the soldiers on sentry duty on the twenty-five-foot rampart wall which overlooks the underground fortress of Jilava, struck stiff with amazement, listened to this song rising up out of the tombs.

“Then night came, and we were shut up in the same old cells, and after such a day it was worse being locked in than ever before. And all the more because the day had lasted long and we had been able to see the stars in the sky—stars that we hadn’t seen for years, and would see no more.”

Theodor stopped speaking.

“What next?”

“Nothing. Just the same as before. And being the same, it was much worse, you see, after these celebrations.

“The old régime began once more. All the promises they had made us were dead letter promises. They had rekindled in us the flame that was dying down inside us, and then, nothing but darkness, isolation, silence—not to mention blows and bad treatment. We were, I tell you, more irrevocably buried than before: I saw that soon enough when the old prison regulations started again after May Day.

“There’s a story they tell about the days of the Inquisition—how the inquisitors found devilish delight in inflicting a new torture on the poor brutes locked up in their dark *in pace*; ‘the torture of

hope' it was called. They would withdraw the guards for one night, open the doors, giving their victim the idea that he was free to escape, letting him reach the very threshold of the world of freedom and light. Then they suddenly caught him again, when he had one foot already set on the soil of the free.

"That's just what they did with us. They prevented us from sinking into the depths of apathy and despair, from taking our lives, only to show us more clearly that we were done for, and that the great cause we cherished counted for nothing in the world. They gave us a few hours' indulgence to have the laugh of us all the more surely, and this time, for good and all.

"Comrades, you have told us of tortures—and we have known them too—that rouse the old Adam in man as nothing else can. But I tell you that this stunt of organising labour day celebrations inside the walls of a bear garden, and between two stiff doses of ill-treatment, was more than we men could stand."

Having thus told their tales in turn, the five nightmare raisers got up to make for bed, for it was late, and next morning they were starting out to begin life over again in the land where the day's work crowns the day with light.

But before we parted, one of them growled out these final words:

"When will the workers understand that they are like a gang of prisoners whom their governors fool now and then with occasional feast days and shows, only the better to deceive them and spite them—punish them for being what they are!"

CONTAMINATION

THE background to this knot of men was so hot with light that one's eyes were dazzled and blinded —flowers, greenery, the sea like a tiled floor of blue, and the sun striking down over all the shore.

The spot where they were sitting, in the shadow of a growing building, was marked by heaps of rubble, wet mortar and bricks. They wore tattered clothes smeared with plaster, and workmen's shoes. Italian was the language they spoke, for they were Italians, driven out by barbarians from a country not unlike France, until the black shirts defiled it. They were working on the *Côte d'Azur*, in the hands of a large contractor, who took advantage of the fact that they were spied on by the Italian police, to sweat them like a herd of beasts, and keep them penned up here. It was the first time they had come together in this place. They did not know one another.

Among this knot of Italian slave refugees there were three workmen from another country. Their grey caps and their mufflers—one blue, one orange and one black—marked them out. They did not understand a word of Italian.

The one who wore the orange muffler was a fat fellow, with a beard as curly as astrakhan. He was always puffing and going *zizi, zizi*, even when he wasn't speaking. As a rule he was rather silent, but sometimes told queer little tales in tolerably good French.

With his hand he pointed—for it was time to go easy now—to something far away.

“A small house out in the snow.”

He explained “snow.” What a contrary fellow to talk of such things in sunshine like that!

He stared at us, hard, one after another, to drive home what he was saying. He showed us his landscape—white, white as a sheet of paper; trees as dry as old feather dusters, swathed in snow; a few pines, however, with green shavings. Here, a big heap of stones on which lay snow, sacks full. There, farm implements, all made of wood; even the plough was entirely made of wood. There, a church tower. And over all—with a downward sweep—snow shavings.

His description made one shudder with cold. We said: “He's going to tell us about a murder.” But no:

“There were children playing.”

“What country are you from?” one of us asked.

“That's Bulgaria,” he said.

“Does it snow there? It's in the south all right.”

He explained that even in fine weather countries

it can be cold too; (for the matter of that, Bulgarian weather is not particularly good) and that countries are like people; all pretty well alike at bottom. Witness this village, this church, these children playing.

"The father," he said, "was standing there, standing on his big feet, flat as platters, and first he watched the children at play. Then off he went, on his big feet.

"The children wore little sheepskin caps, some grey, some black. Some new, others worn bare in places. They had soft leather leggings and shoes like leather stockings. When they called to one another by name they said: 'Mentcho, Netcho, Dinkcho.' "

"What were they playing at?"

"Ah, that was it. They were playing at the big, important things they had heard talk of. They were playing at Life with a big L!"

"Children," sententiously remarked a Piedmontese who spoke French, "are more intelligent than men, because they know less foolishness. But they've one big fault; they imitate men as much as they can!"

The Bulgarian, who had waited till the Piedmontese had done talking, went on:

"A few years back—and several of these children were only just crawling about and making noises then—they were playing at war. Armies, generals,

gun firing, beating of peasants by loud-voiced, gold-striped soldiers."

Clearly this Bulgarian had the gift of expression.

"You're a school teacher?"

"Yes. But they had heard that the war with foreign countries was over. So war games were no longer the thing. They were playing at police games now, instead of war games. They had heard tales of the dire deeds of vengeance done by police officers and judges, men who search houses in towns and make their appearance in villages, like the Destroying Angel in the Bible story; and these tales had had an exciting effect upon their imaginations.

"Now there were three criminals who were far more famous than all others; the three men guilty of the outrage in the Cathedral: Koeb, Zadgorski, and Friedmann. These were the three, but Marco Friedmann was the tallest in height, and they talked especially of him.

"Thousands of men had been killed by the police heroes after the bomb exploded in the Cathedral. But they hadn't, unfortunately, taken photographs of all that, whereas Friedmann's trial and end had been cinematographed. The children knew that fifty thousand people had been there to see the ceremony and that it had been like a great festival. They also knew all that Friedmann had said: how in court, he had never stopped crying: "I am inno-

cent." And the journalists' cameras had recorded his smallest movements at the last, up to the very moment when the gods of justice had hung him, under the spectacled nose of the Public Prosecutor, before Pope and officials and officers and soldiers and fifty thousand good people.

"It was this final scene that the children were acting. The prosecutor was there, the general, the Pope and the executioner, and Marco Friedmann. The crowd was the only missing thing, but, after all, they had what really mattered.

"The boy who was Marco Friedmann wasn't very pleased. He frowned and looked gloomy, and that was all to the good.

"The royal judge clenched his fists and pursed up his lips. His forehead had a wrinkle. He had put spectacles on to be more like the judge.

"And now the pigmy Friedmann grew excited and began shouting: 'I am innocent!'

"'Silence, scoundrel!' cried the Pope, tapping the ground with his foot. But he didn't dare to move too much, for fear of getting his legs mixed up in his Pope's skirts.

"The children had chosen this place for the trial because there was a swing standing there and it did capitally for the gallows.

"'Hang him!' they cried.

"They did just what the picture postcards, newspaper photographs and cinema had shown was

done. They tied a rope to the hook up top and round the neck of the condemned; they put a sack on his head. They made him get up on a table.

"The sentence was read. The prosecutor took it from the clerk's hands and read it himself. He read it really well, emphasising his words, and trembling a little because these were serious doing (and the sentence was the real sentence, carefully copied out).

"'Away with the table!' they said.

"The moment was such a solemn one that his majesty's prosecutor threw away the cigarette he was smoking like a man.

"Marco Friedmann's tiny legs kicked about in the air.

"And they hanged him.

"They cut him down. But a few moments had come between, strangely exciting, voluptuous moments, and when they cut him down, there was nothing left but a poor little puppet of flesh and blood. The face underneath the sack, which was not easy to take off, was so still and so white, so like the snow, that they let him drop to the ground and ran away.

"The father was a long way off at work. No one knew anything till the evening."

The other Bulgarian, with the blue muffler, now began to speak, and the sound of his voice seemed familiar.

"I know that story about the child actually hung by his playmates. But it didn't happen exactly like that. It was in June or July, and there wasn't any snow. It was in the country, near Bourgas."

"Not a bit of it," interrupted the third Bulgarian, with the black muffler for colours. "It was in a suburb of Pleven that all this happened. A little boy was found, stiff as a log; his playmates had hanged him for fun, to copy grown-up people as far as they could."

"What's all this?" one of us asked.

Explanations followed, and it appeared that the first was right, the second wasn't wrong, while the third had told the strict truth. There were several more or less similar episodes, and all ended the same way.

The true story happened several times over. It is more than true, then. And what is no less true, is the contamination spread by savagery, and mad and criminal acts.

AND WE WERE CELEBRATING PEACE

SAMUEL SCHWARTZBARD, a young man of gentle and dreamy disposition, silent and poor, is slowly returning home to his quarter—the Jewish quarter in the town of Proskurov, in Polodia. It is evening, fine and still; a pale light gleams in the snowy winter sky.

Eight years have gone by since this peaceful incident, on which I invite you to look back through the past. Eight years—no great stretch of time in the life of mortals, and neither you nor I were much younger then than we are now.

It was the 15th of February, then, in 1919; which means that the little town was covered in snow. In the half light, the houses seemed to be carefully wrapped up in white paper. There was a cold and crackling, cotton-wool carpet underfoot and the soles of one's boots were quickly coated with thick white felt.

Samuel had come from far. He had been through the great war as a volunteer, fighting in the French army, and had in turn been wounded in the lungs, congratulated, decorated, and naturalised as a

Frenchman. But he had felt the wish to return, to see the people and all, and to enjoy that suppressed charm which broods in white silence over the Ukrainian landscape.

That day the streets had been full of noise, of clamour too. A crowd of men, women and children had thronged them, and this crowd had been happy because the weather was fine, and because it was a Saturday. The town of Proskurov, which contains twenty-five thousand Christians and fifteen thousand Jews, enjoys in consequence two holidays in the week—Saturday, the sabbath day, and Sunday. And Jew and orthodox Christian have only to be practical to profit by both.

The shops were closed. Family groups in Sunday best had gone in their numbers to the banks of the Beug which, like every self-respecting river in the Ukraine, is frozen over in the month of February. The children had taken their skates out of the little bags which they always carry, and had gone sliding dizzily over the solid surface.

All these people, whose varied figures were silhouetted against the pure white of the snow—sunlight and moonlight, too—knew that wars were going on at the time and that the Ukraine was claimed and disputed by the Directorate, under the Ataman Petliura's controlling arm, by Denikin's White Army, and by the Poles. There were battles in consequence; the newspapers talked of them, and many

of these honest citizens read the communiq  s. The same papers also gave them some news of Western Europe, for after all they lived only four days away from Paris, the centre of the civilised world, where the victors even now were elaborating the peace of the peoples of Europe, and the institution of the new Reign of Right.

Proskurov was under the control of the Ataman Petliura. Throughout the district he was absolute dictator. Quite recently he had put into the town a garrison consisting of one brigade of his Zaporog Cossacks and the 3rd Haidamak Regiment, all under the command of the Ataman Semessensko. This young man, a twenty-year-old general with blue eyes and a girlish face, was to be seen prancing about on horseback, in his wide-cut breeches, yellow riding boots and well-waisted dolman of green, much to the despair of the ladies. And while Petliura was away fighting with the enemy elsewhere, he was therefore governor and master of the town.

That very day, his troops had been seen marching by and, like everybody else, Samuel Schwartzbard had seen them passing along the wide Alexander road in one direction at two in the afternoon, in the other at five o'clock (which was only just past), in splendid order, a band playing at their head. The sight had set the hearts of young men and maidens beating, aroused the enthusiasm of

the children, who hummed the tunes and put one foot forward out of sheer love of imitation.

Samuel Schwartzbard was walking along Alexander Street. It is the main thoroughfare of Pros-kurov, distinguished by the size and well-to-do appearance of the houses and you take it to go anywhere. Down from the windows floated the gay sounds of piano or gramophone.

The Jewish quarter, to which he was going, is more modest. The "Ducks' Quarter," as they call it, consists of great blocks of poor dwellings intersected by little nameless alleys running in parallel lines into Sorborngia Street, which adjoins Alexander Street.

On that evening, many of those Jewish dwellings were lit up—and with electric light at that! It was the sabbath, and no son of Israel may light lamp or fire that day. And so it is the custom in the Ducks' Quarter to stoke up the fires on Friday night, so as to have warmth enough next day without breaking the law, and to leave the electric switches open: the power station turns on the current at nightfall, and on goes the light of itself.

Before him stands the Schenkmann's little house, and the window is ablaze with light. But not a sound can be heard. Surprising silence reigns. Samuel draws nearer. How is this? The door wide open! In the hall, a broken table, overturned chairs. The living-room: a big bed, and lying in it, some-

one with head exposed on the pillow. Strange, this dark head with its red beard and twisted smile! One nearer look: it is battered in, slashed, black with blood—a beast of some kind, one would say, wet and glistening with bright drips in the light of the electric lamp, and the bright splashes of blood are also conspicuous on the sheets. This is the father of the family. In one corner, a big round lump, oozing blood, covered in crimson rags—the mother, Mrs. Schenkmann, hacked and pierced with sword-thrusts. There, on the ground, the headless bodies of two children, little Moïch and his sister; their heads have rolled under the bed.

And in the brightly-lit houses close by—Bleckman's, Averbruch's, Semelman's, Kretchak's—and in all the rest down the street, the same scene over again.

Under the electric light of the lamps which had lit up of their own accord, nothing but dead bodies—five, ten, fifteen, twenty and more at a time—slit up, pierced through, twisted into strange death-agonies; children and babies lying on the hearth, some decapitated, others with heads cracked open like eggs on the mantel-piece. Every mantelpiece bore traces and fragments of children's brains and entrails.

The streets were thick with corpses, like stretches of ground on a battlefield. A few, recognisable when one bent over them, seemed to be

struggling and imploring mercy still. Against one corner was the body of a girl, head propped up against the wall, stayed there in an upright position; with her bloody hands she was holding up her dress, showing her loins and thighs, gashed by a slashing sword or axe. "Pull up your dress, we're going to whip you," they had said; and the soldiers had laid on as hard as they could with scourges of steel.

A great many bodies were neatly laid on top of one another; children, girls and young men had been forced to lie down at full length on top of their relations and then, with one thrust, nailed to earth with sword and cutlass, as their bodies lay in tiers.

Samuel Schwartzbard, pale, staring with a drunkard's eyes, went from house to house.

Under that crude light the whole Jewish quarter lay in death. There was one house where he saw movements behind the curtains, but when he staggered up to the door, figures hastily stepped over bodies and broken chairs and fled: this household had been murdered too but had been entered by thieves. Wherever one went, all were dead, or nearly all. An appalling silence and a fresh slaughter-house smell reigned throughout the ghastly quarter. Blood still dripped from the wounds, and the pools could be seen slowly spreading. When the young man instinctively drew down

the clothes torn aside to disclose a jagged pit in the stomach of a little girl—her face was adorable—his hand told him that the body was still quite warm.

... It wasn't very difficult to see what had happened: this was the work that the Cossacks of Semessensko and Petliura had been doing between the hours of two and five—the work of those smart troops which had marched so grandly past, bands playing, before and after.

In every lighted interior death lay, but there were some houses in entire darkness. In these, there were still signs of life. Survivors had run to earth there. As a sign of mourning, and through fear and sense of decency and shame, they had put out the lights and stayed where they were.

Samuel felt his way into one of these houses, among these shadows of misery and grief; some were groaning without pause, some drinking their tears, some trembling like trees, some had even forgotten how to cry. At last they became dimly visible, like fountains and landmarks. And from their lips came low-voiced complaints, interspersed with pitiable shuddering maledictions, telling of things such as these:

This they had done, and this: a father tortured and dismembered in the midst of his family, forcibly gathered round to watch the sight; then his wife and daughters and little girls brutally as-

saulted, then all hewn down and shattered; all with great dispatch, without loss of time, by numbers.

Sometimes Petliura's Cossacks had forced mothers to hold their babies to the knife with their own hands; the neck was sliced through and the tiny body, streaming with blood, left in the mother's arms; her body they ran through a few moments after—when she had had the time to sound the gulfs of despair to their very depths.

In other houses, they had made the victims strip; the whole family grouped together, naked: lean old men, fat women, willowy girls—all displayed their bodies, overwhelmed with terror and shame. "And now, dance!" They raised their legs, gambolled, danced, and were struck down one by one; the last survivor was kept dancing by murderous threats until a bullet pierced him through forehead or chest, and he toppled over onto the heap of his own kith and kin.

They had hung naked Jews by their hands to the ceiling in a room where a wood fire was alight. The soldiers then had played at slicing off the biggest slice of flesh at a blow; then they roasted these lumps of meat and put them to the mouth of the tortured onlookers.

Some had been forced to eat their clothes before being killed. One old man had had his beard shaved off and been made to eat it; then, when they had laughed enough at the sight, they had bled him.

Young Spector, they said, had been killed before his father's eyes, then the father had been ordered to lick his own child's blood.

They had hacked off arms, legs, lips, put out eyes, disembowelled pregnant women—and if inside the houses they had mostly worked with the steel, in the streets they had used rifles and machine-guns to fire on those jumping out of the windows to escape.

And well they knew, these few ship-wrecked survivors floating on a sea of blood, who could only bleed tears, that this pogrom in Proskurov—which had accounted that day, in three hours, for three thousand five-hundred to four thousand victims, eighteen hundred of whom were dead,—was only one little episode in the great campaign of extermination against the Jews which had descended upon the country now that the Head Ataman Petliura held it in his clutches. Proskurov, Elisabetgrad, Jitemir, Bar, Petchera, Filchtine, and fifty other towns and districts in the Ukraine, only indicate the scenes of the worst massacres in the long tale of martyrdom. Between 1917 and 1920, according to the lowest estimates, one-hundred thousand people were massacred, every one innocent in the eyes of heaven.

Let it not be said that these are exaggerations. Attested statements exist, countless reports, detailed records of inquiries; such a mass of documents that facts cannot be questioned and that one

thing only is assured—namely that many of these horrors have never come to light.

Let it not be said that the Jews have themselves to blame for their extermination. On the contrary, these were peaceful tribes, having nothing to do with politics.

Let it not be said that the commander-in-chief is not responsible for the wildness of his subordinate officers. However great the disgust we may feel for those man-faced beasts called Semessensko, Palienko, Anghel, Petrov, Kozyr-Zyrko, and for many others besides (who are perhaps flourishing and strutting about at this very moment in some capital, like the ruffian Makhno in Paris), for all those who organised the main pogroms during the vile period of Petliura's military dictatorship—Petliura is to blame over and above them all. The massacres were nothing but a systematic display of anti-Jewish and nationalist savagery. No complaints were made: "Filthy Jews!" they said, and that was enough. Petliura winked at this wholesale slaughter, countenanced it. The reserves that he made were of the mildest, and *post eventum*, to please the gallery's ears. He declared that pogroms were necessary to keep up the spirit of his army. To the survivors of one such wholesale slaughter, he said: "They had no business to leave you alive." As for the contention that the brute had no personal interest in these pogroms, it must not be

forgotten that in almost every case they were followed by plundering and the imposition of heavy fines. The fact is that the Jewish community was decimated and reduced to beggary too. The assassin, in this case, was a thief into the bargain.

... Such were the tales told that evening, by a few miserable wretches huddled together in the Jewish quarter, in one of the few households that death had left unvisited.

Before me lies a cutting from one of today's papers:

Samuel Schwartzbard, a Jew, will shortly be tried for murder at the Seine Assizes. On the 25th May, 1926, in the Rue Racine, Schwartzbard went up to the ex-ataman Petliura, who was living at Paris and was on his way to a restaurant, and after making sure of his identity, shot him.

April, 1927.

THE EMBRACE

“Good afternoon.”

“Good afternoon, Andreas.”

“Come in.”

“How strange your voice sounds.”

“Come in.”

“Very well. Andreas, where’s Rita?”

“I don’t know. Rita and I are no longer friends.”

“What’s this? You . . . she . . . the ideal couple,
the loving pair, the delight of all eyes . . . ?

“We no longer love each other.”

“You don’t mean . . . Tell me, Andreas, is she
alive?”

“Oh, yes, she’s alive.”

“Well, then, tell me . . .”

“It’s all through the prisons of Hungary.”

“I knew that you had both been in prison. But
you weren’t there long.”

“Not long! Six months. . . .”

“Were you beaten, or hurt . . . ? Why do you
turn your head away, Andreas? Ah, I can guess;
they disfigured her. Was that it?”

“No. It is not what you think.”

"Come, tell me, I beg you."

"Well, in prison, there was a Captain des Pronay and he hated us so that he went mad when he saw us. 'You two,' he said, 'you're lovers, very well . . .'"

"You shall be parted . . ."

"On the contrary. He said, 'We'll have you bound together.'"

"Yes, and then?"

"He bound us one to the other, fully dressed, tightly round the waist."

"And then?"

"Then came days, and nights and days. Do you understand? No, you can't. First of all, we thought we were going to die together, and the clasp of the ropes was sweet to us, with our hearts beating and eyes gazing, each to each. But it was not for death that we were bound, but for life."

"The more be thanked."

"No, the less."

"That's beyond me."

"Of course it is. Before this happened, I would have said the same. You can't understand what it was like. The moment you opened your eyes, or stopped twisting your neck to turn away a little, that face breathing in your face! There wasn't a hand's breadth between our two faces. At first, it was wonderful, having these two pupils before my eyes, magnified as it were, with long throbbing

lashes; that mouth, so close, that when I trembled I bumped it with my own. But, in time, in time . . . then again . . .”

“Andreas, you’re blushing.”

“Yes, I am too ashamed to recall it. Two bodies clamped to each other, like *that*. . . .”

“You’re hurting my shoulders, Andreas. Your fingers are like talons.”

“That’s so as you may begin to understand.”

“But you moved, you walked about, tied together in this way?”

“Yes, but that’s enough. I don’t want to give any details.”

“Of course, of course, but . . .”

“Enough! Days, nights, weeks, months!”

“But, Andreas, pity alone would . . .”

“Pity is driven out, like all that is sweet, by such things.”

“But, Andreas, your companion was nothing . . .”

“The counterweight, I tell you. We said (that was the first week) : ‘Never mind, then. I love you my poor darling, I love you. Don’t be afraid of me. We’ll forget the past,’ and all the rest of it.

“Then both pity and love were swallowed up little by little in the certainty that we could *not* forget, in the horror of it all.”

“But even so . . .”

“In the filth, in the smell.”

"Enough from you, Andreas: no more!"

"And in the horrible satiety of one and the same eternal picture; the knocking together of two faces stamped upon each other—that face, like a hand!

"At first, the twin monster that we made could not sleep. Our eyes, enlarged and strained, frightened sleep away. Then we slept. But there was the awakening.

"The ropes hurt me to the full extent of her weight, and that weight I gave back in equal measure. The exhaustion of the one was a drag, a load, a scourge on the exhaustion of the other. We struggled, resisted each other. But all that was a rifle. Above all, I repeat . . ."

"No, do not repeat it."

"But I will—above all, that coarse contemplation of another body, that relentless communion with its outlines, its life—worse than a post mortem. The breathing, the pulsation, the hideous transparency of that soft-wheeled piece of mechanism which we call our body. The human body is a pitiful thing—more pitiful even than a prisoner's body. . . . You can only dimly see what I mean, just as my poor devil of a brother, who was religious, dimly visualised hell. You can make guesses, but you really know nothing about it at all."

"What has come over you so suddenly, Andreas? You are excited, you rise to your feet!"

"Do I know myself? Which was the worse, the horror of the flesh, or the horror of the mind! When 'I love you' is said no more, when each withdraws into himself or herself and then you groan, and then you begin to cry aloud until hate is heard in those cries and the glances that flash to and fro put out the light of your eyes.

"So down we fell—down through all worlds of exasperation, torment and disgust. I reproached her with being herself; she reproached me for being myself. It was time, the length of time, to which we succumbed. But it must be admitted, neither of us held out very long. Even the crime that two might commit together, the shame in the passion two might feel towards each other are things which at least are over and done with quickly. But time brings its fearful revenge when an intimacy is prolonged. It becomes a thing of disease, of madness, of blood and death. There are sufferings which as far as one can tell may have only lasted for a few moments, but in the long run, they fairly make you howl. And 'in the long run' means after a few hours.

"It was after six months that we were released, and were free to turn our backs on each other.

"And now as I see her in my mind's eye, again she seems distorted, and my eyes seem to ache at the sight. Again I am turned into a beast. It was impossible for us to forgive."

"But what of her? Will she not . . . ?"

"No, never! Far less soon than I could."

". . . But, Andreas, think what tortures countless others have endured."

"I know. Some I have witnessed. I saw C—— (and even now, such were his screams, such the sound of those instruments, that I still have him before my eyes when I close them)—I saw how he was tortured. All his teeth were knocked out with a log of wood; then they made him swallow his teeth, and to send them down, when they had been shoved into his mouth, he was forced to swallow the contents of a pan that one of the gendarmes fetched from the infirmary. The pain and physical disgust killed him. And I saw S——'s face, at first convulsed, rigid at last, when they were stripping the soles from his feet like the sole off a boot. And comrade L——, I saw the shapeless lump of meat that was left when they forced her baby back alive, inside her, using lances, axes and clubs. And, there was that Hungarian peasant—a noble figure, straight-shouldered and self-contained, the giver of cold replies—I saw him go by one day on his way to the prison judge's room. We could hear everything through the door (I was there, waiting my turn). And as he would not lie and confess to a conspiracy and give the names they needed, as he would not even open his mouth, they wanted to draw cries from him. We heard the whistle and

slap of the sword blades on his flesh, the knock-knock of the sharp steel on his bones, then there was a sudden silence, while they were doing something we could not hear—but not a word, not a cry from his lips. And then, at last, a terrible scream. Soon the door opened, and past us he went with the tramp of heavy feet about him. The man who had held himself so straight but half-an-hour before, was crumpled up on a stretcher; so silent then, he was yelling and foaming abundantly now. The clothes round his middle had been torn away, his stomach was exposed and below that, a red hole. The police agent who had emasculated him had used a rusty knife; he was also heard to boast that, for once, he had gone to work with a pretty heavy hand.

"Why do I tell you all this? Ah, yes, only to prove to you that I too, like all those who have been through the gaols of Hungary, not as tourists, have seen these things. But there are places where I have seen worse than that; I have seen Death, in uniform, sword and stripes and all, stalking into houses, compelling fathers to denounce their sons, children to grasp their fathers in self-defence like a shield, and believers—Jews even—to blaspheme against their faith. But I say that the monsters who bound fast together two beings in the prime of life and love and youth, carried the fiendish devices of cruelty one step further. With

heir instruments of torture, they have plucked out even the secret life of their hearts.

"Comrade, every human being, whether he knows it or not, has a red flag rolled up inside *his* heart. Such as I am, I am eager to set to the great work, and help to unfurl them, every one, and set them flying over the earth.

"For see, while bodies in prison are waxing old, the gospel of revolution is younger than ever, and goes forward exulting. I tell you, my hatred of the ruffians who lord it over the masses in all countries, ave one, is uplifted to-day in a mighty outburst of oy. Hurrah!"

THE NAKED MAN

IN the Skupshtina of Belgrade, the other day, a spectre was seen—the White Terror personified.

Visit any chamber of Parliament in Europe between sittings, and it will look the same as any other. These places of assembly so alarmingly official are always smaller than one imagined. In their great curving lines, their corridors, ante-rooms and lobbies, they resemble the circus. But when empty of voices and faces, these chambers of legislature wear an air of calm reflection which somehow intimidates the visitor. Pompous, stiff decorations, in their emptiness they seem particularly empty. That atmosphere of injustice, of the sacristy, which hangs about deserted court-rooms when silence is imprisoned there between the hours of sitting, is also in the air, and inspires the same uneasy fear, when one treads in these centralised workshops where contemporary events are turned out in words.

And every parliament chamber looks the same when it is full and in full swing. Here, scandals and iniquities vanish like magic to the sound of the big base drum, after a few wordy encounters

which, from a distance, might give the impression of a debate. Everything is sanctioned by votes cast in advance, so that the difference between the parliamentary system and the prerogative of despotic rule comes to this: the parliamentary system has only added tremendous waste of time. . . .

So the Skupshtina of Jugoslavia is like every parliament-house in this ancient world, except that its name is the Skuptchina, not the Reichstag, Reichsrath, Sobranié, Sëjm or House of Commons or Chamber of Deputies.

Well, Mr. Maximovitch, Minister for the Interior, was answering questions. Under his nose they had thrust glaring testimony concerning the savage acts of terrorism committed by government officials and subordinates during the General Council elections. The facts were patent, well attested, undeniable; they proved once more this proverbial truth—that elections in Jugoslavia mean nothing but systematic maltreatment of voters to make sure of sound votes.

And what was the reply of Mr. Maximovitch, who really had none? He raised his hands aloft.

“Certainly not!” he exclaimed. “It is all a mistake. Never did the world see government as meek and liberal-minded as mine. Force? Nothing of the kind. Freedom, I say, freedom, perfect and entire, unparalleled.

To judge from his words, no Cabinet ever shone with purer democratic light than the Ministry to which he had the honour to belong. With hand on heart, this minister spoke like a regular delegate to the League of Nations.

“But,” came the retort from the opposition benches, “on such and such a date, *this* happened, and *this*. . . .”

“Not true! Not true! The facts are utterly false. They have been drawn from ancient history, or from the history of the neighbouring country. It is the Bolsheviks who are circulating these stories to blacken Jugoslavia in the eyes of the world. So-and-So? He has had the best of treatment. So-and-So? Why, his foot was scarcely trodden on. So-and-So? Why, he beat the poor gendarme himself!”

Now while Mr. Davidovitch, leader of the opposition and of the Democratic party, was thundering, attested documents in hand, while his voice was drowned in the resentful mutterings of the government majority, a message was passed down to him.

“Come at once to the Democratic Club.”

He went. There in a corner, crumpled up on a chair, with a crowd about him, was something which looked like a man. He was battered, he was swollen and blue and disjointed, yet still alive at the core, so to speak. They were crowding round him, doing what they could for him—and when

he was touched, or when his back met the chair, he cried out in pain.

Those around explained to Mr. Davidovitch that this pitiable sight went by the name of Iovan Ristitch, tollgate keeper at Toptchider, just outside Belgrade.

He had been reduced to this plight at election time, for his half-hearted support of the government candidate, by the strong arm of Mr. Sokolovitch, police commissioner at Toptchider.

Someone suggested stripping the poor fellow, as he sat there groaning and struggling miserably to shift his position, as if he was sitting on blazing coals.

His back was beaten blue, striped and spotted with bloody marks.

“We must take him to the House!”

They gathered him up in their arms, this living wreck, this man half-broken, as one might gather up a regimental flag riddled with bullets.

To the Skupshtina they went, jostling their way in at the doors—and, there, right among the members, propped up this quivering statue of flesh and blood, this memorial to governmental proceedings. They set the body down, like a scarecrow, half-stripped, so that the dreadful tattooings and beastly marks of the club might clearly be seen. Lolling on the top of this battered body was a haggard head; the hair was plastered down to the forehead with agony and sweat; the eyes were closed.

Every member sprang to his feet, and began shouting.

The creature became frightened, opened two eyes, and a mouth; his hands trembled as they hung from those arms forged by the King's Commissioner of Police.

He seemed to be sinking back into the nightmare from which he had only just got free. Were they going to beat him again? The terrified look on his face seemed like another wound there.

At the sight of this martyr, bearing the impress of the elections on his flesh, the opposition became one menacing body, and yelled with a single voice: "Murderers!"

This was meant for Maximovitch and all his coadjutors, and his masters, for it was obvious that Ristitch bore the marks of the fists of every man jack among them, from the gendarme up to His Majesty himself.

But other members grew angry for another cause and they, in gradually swelling numbers, called: "Shame! Shame!"

It was shameful, they said, to bring a man without clothes into the precincts of the most self-respecting of parliaments, and to lay bare the wounds of a martyr to the ruling régime. And now this roar of indignation smothered the first.

Mr. Maximovitch, of course, was placed in an awkward and annoying position; and, of course, he lost no time in making a scape-goat of Sokolovitch,

the Commissioner of Police who had been so clumsy as to allow these wounds—or this man—to remain as evidence, and had carried out his duties as police commissioner so carelessly and thoughtlessly. He was deprived of his post and proceeded against.

Nice-minded people, however, who always carry more weight and outnumber those who see too far and shout too loud, were *offended*, rather than anything else, by this scandal in the Skupshtina.

Things of this kind are not done. There is nothing more dangerous to *bourgeois* peace of mind, consequently, nothing more sacrilegious, than to tear down the veils, strip a human being to show him as he really is. Why naked men? There is the cross; wave it on high as much as you like: it cannot hear, or speak, or see. And again, there are the doings which extremists always label as crimes: these you can smooth over as much as you like. But lay a finger on the living sore, tear vest and shirt from the carcass of a common man, to show the marks social truth has left on his body—no, never! That is an unheard of outrage, the most unspeakable of all!

PART III
THE REST

THE SCHOOLMASTER

WHAT a hot day! You can hear the flies buzzing past, see their swarms darting through the fiery air. The passers-by take care to keep in the line of shadow running along the grey house walls. This is the village square of Cavada, in the province of Santander, and it is not unlike the squares in many other villages in Spain and the Basque country. It was gayer in former times when the costumes were bright, but it is still picturesque enough, and the dry hot air that sweeps this land of sharp-crested cordilleras and dark-skinned men glitters here too.

The flies buzz to and fro, but another sound, a loud monotonous murmur, can be heard coming through the walls in regular cadence. Here stands the school. Inside, this school looks very much like any other school the world over. Gloomy, forbidding walls—the husk of our schools will not change till Society changes its own; little desks in a row, every one black, and little heads, black, too (circles superimposed on squares); and in their midst, a man that looks like a giant standing there—the schoolmaster.

Like all members of that universal brotherhood,

he shews amazing ingenuity and patience in capturing the attention of these thirty little heads and in driving into them some part of the great panorama of life.

The schoolmaster of Cavada was called Baldomero Zori. He was a quiet, simple and gentle-natured man whom everybody described by one word: conscientious. Within the small circumference of the village his punctuality was proverbial and if ever he had been late for school everyone would have assumed that the clock was slow.

The scrupulous honesty of his life was reflected in his thoughts, and so his thoughts—especially those concerned with the organisation and co-operation of society—were not to everybody's liking. Some declared him to be a "Red." But even those who expressed surprise in their homes, their miserable slave-like homes, at the thought that a man could be a Red and an honest fellow too, could not help thinking highly of Baldomero Zori.

But the two chief personages in Cavada—the rector and curate—thought very differently. And they detested the schoolmaster all the more heartily because there was no fault to find with him—save for his devilish opinions about freedom and the general happiness.

The rector and curate had control over the school—that workshop which turns out the coming generation. Keep a firm grip on the schools if you

don't want to see the future slipping through your fingers!

There was once a man called Francisco Ferrer who tried to free the schools of Spain from the icy shadow of the Church. Ferrer was shot. The bullets shattered his body before he could give full vent, for the last time, to that cry which had inspired every hour of his life: Long live the Schools!

After that triumph, the priests of Spain swooped down more fiercely than ever upon the schools. In this, they were supported by a Royal house whose portrait gallery displays the most hideous and pompous collection of degenerates in all history; they were also supported by the Dictatorship. For where army officers are kings, priests hold the sceptre. Here, moreover, was a country where both hierarchies were making back, arm in arm, to Inquisition days. Alas for those eloquent speakers who try to persuade the masses that by the inviolable law of progress every day brings them greater freedom and happiness! Truly it is no easy task to lend colour to such dark jests as these!

So the rector and his shadow, the curate, looked upon this unpleasantly sincere and independent-minded school-master, who was all the more dangerous because he was liked, with a deadly hate. But as they could not detect anything seditious in his acts and words, they set about catching him in another trap.

Today, in the unhappy land of Spain, rectors have the right to visit the schools to see what kind of teaching goes on inside.

On the day I am describing, while the class was at work, the door opened. Through the opening that projected a door of light into the darker classroom entered the two men in black. And there they stood listening.

Zori went on imperturbably with the lesson that he was giving. He was questioning little Juanito, who felt suddenly shy—perhaps he had not been listening properly—and stammered out:

“Justice . . . equality . . .”

Two long strides, and the rector came to a standstill in front of the urchin.

“What’s that?” he asked, in a fury.

But Juanito was dumbfounded, dispossessed, and gaped. Ruiz, who was fourteen and the best boy in the class, wanting to show that he had been listening and remembered what had been said, rose and repeated:

“Please, sir, all men are equal.”

“It isn’t true!” almost yelled the man in the black cassock. Darting forward, he thrust his fist under the nose of the intelligent pupil. “It isn’t true! That is not what the Church teaches us. God never said that men were equal, and Saint Paul, in His name, declares that they are unequal!”

He was shouting; a vein stood out on his temples, tiny bubbles formed at the corners of his lips; the

curate, content with gesticulating, raised his arms aloft.

The schoolmaster came forward, firm and collected.

“Allow me, rector,” he said.

“Allow you what?” bellowed the priest. “To tell lies and teach them to these children? To say that men are equal is to utter a lie forbidden of God; do you hear? Children, listen to me, your teacher is telling you lies.”

“Stop that!” said the schoolmaster. He had turned very pale, his eyes were set, his hands trembled a little.

But the rector began bawling louder than ever: “You lie! Your lessons are all lies. You are scoffing at the Church. . . . Justice? Justice indeed! No man may talk of justice to Christians; it is no business of theirs; Justice is God. You may only talk to them of Faith and Love.”

And with such hard hatred did he spit out the word “Love,” in front of the terrified children, into the man’s face, that the schoolmaster drew back, whiter yet, eyes dilating. The children were getting up, stirring in their seats. He felt lost and stammered out:

“You are a wretch.”

No sooner had he uttered the word than the rector rushed at him and gripped his arms while the curate raised his hand to strike him.

But the rector was not holding his arms firmly,

for two shots rang out. The rector collapsed and lay still in a heap, the curate fell and writhed on the ground.

Then the wild-eyed schoolmaster, recalled to his senses, fired a third shot and fell beside them.

Such, in the year 1926, in a great country, was the end of a schoolmaster who dared to talk of justice to children.

Only a few newspapers were bold enough to give an account of the tragedy, but it would be vain to search for it in the leading papers. For, as you know, the aim of our more widely read newspapers is to conceal what happens.

CIVILISATION'S ONWARD TREAD

AND now, my friends, let us go far, far away from the lands where you, my scattered audience, live, to find another true story to add to those you have already heard.

On the world's map, West Africa looks like a vast allotment field, covering a considerable portion of the terrestrial sphere, and geometrically divided into sections that still look somewhat empty. But no one has bought these allotments, for their price in ready cash would be too high; these handsome and regular map divisions indicate the portions of territory shared out between the Great Powers on the day they happened to discover that they were the lawful owners.

If you go inland in this continent, you find yourself almost at once in the bush, an endless forest of stunted trees, so scorched and stripped by the sun that during nine months of the year they look like our trees in winter.

Only during the downpours of the rainy season do they turn green.

Dotted about here and there in this endless jungle are newly-made towns containing governors' palaces

and banks; each one has its native quarter, a dreary patch of waste ground looking like a concentration camp, or, if you prefer, like a chicken-run; this is where they dump those well-meaning devils, the negroes.

There are more negroes living in villages, in the jungle. One of these lies a few hundred miles out of Bamako, a glaring new town laid out much on the same plan as a Colonial exhibition. This village stands in a clearing and consists of some twenty peak-shaped straw huts, looking like the tops of church spires stuck into the ground.

The village is called Dialaku. Here in former days, Bambaras, Ouolofs and other blacks shared a somewhat vegetable existence, which was otherwise sensible and quiet enough. Time passed in work and play. Things went on much as they should anywhere on the planet's surface in the primitive era of man.

Old Amhadu and old Dziti lived there with their family, happily enough. The two boys, Tiki and Kokobi, used to watch the sheep and goats and oxen which completed the family circle. Now and then they would climb the palm-trees, provided with ladders for this very purpose, to go and suck a little palm wine up at the top, out of a notch cut in the trunk, or drink fresh milk out of calabashes, or go on hunting expeditions or else exploring, for the negroes there are as inquisitive as they are fond of

fun. Together with Bala, their sister, they used to take part in the tom-toms when they danced or sang to the clapping of hands round a bonfire. And at night, like good Moslems, they all did their ablutions and said their prayers.

In this hut, there were also two tiny little nigger boys who, till they were promoted to the highly-honoured rank of shepherd-boy, amused themselves with the bonfires and tom-toms and played about the clearing, plaguing the bands of baboons which are half-monkey and half-dog and therefore half-man.

Ahmadu's family was respected by the other villagers, who were simple, honest souls, and when the village Chief dropped in now and then to have a look round, bearing the lance which was the sign of authority, he never had a word to say against them.

Well, France came, to develop this village. France was already well represented in the district, in the person of her soldiers and officials, having long since converted her right of might into right of occupation in the Sudan. By this I mean that she began to take a closer interest in the village of Diakalu.

No doubt you will tell me—and I readily agree—that it would be an admirable thing for a wiser and more civilised race to put her wisdom and culture at the disposal of another race, with the object

of improving its well-being, broadening and enriching its intelligence, and giving life a fuller meaning. But that sort of colonisation only exists in after-dinner speeches, in the official jargon of electioneering posters. Peaceful penetration and co-operation of that order will only come when the brotherhood of oppressed mankind begins to look after its own affairs. In the meantime, colonising means anything but the interest of the natives, and even implies getting rid of them by methodical means. And we need not go further than this particular district to find proof of this, for the black population is dwindling there as if by magic, and will soon be a thing of the past. They are being wiped out, like a disease, by the "rationalisation" of their country; only enough are kept to provide a sufficient supply of beasts of burden.

And so it was that lines of blacks were to be seen walking down the path to the village, carrying bales on their backs and white men in palanquins.

The white men had large huts built for them. Kokobi, Ahmadu's second eldest boy, was made a servant by one of them. Things weren't very bright. Kokobi was knocked about and overworked. He wanted to leave. Both his master and the Village Chief forbade him to do so. He ran away. He was chased through the jungle and had his arm fractured by a bullet—for it was of the utmost importance that the white man's authority should be

respected. (Nevertheless, out of respect for the liberty of man they pretended this was an accident.) The wound took a turn for the worse. There was no doctor; any traveller will tell you that there is no sanitary organisation at all in the country. So there was nothing for it but to carry Kokobi off, lying prone, to the nearest hospital—about a week's march. There was news of him to begin with; then it stopped coming.

There was no news either of young Bala, that slender and arrowy girl, the lovely little statue in plastic bronze; she had attracted the attention of a colonial N. C. O. who had set up in princely style in Diakalu. This adorable little phantom of a Bambara girl disappeared—whisked off, Heaven knew where.

Then, the excavations that were being made to make room for a big factory unearthed swarms of insects and mosquitoes which scientists call by a horrid name, and that started an epidemic. A certain number of stricken white men were moved elsewhere, but the black victims mostly died, for there was still no doctor. Medical help was supposed to be on the way, but it never came. There was no hurry. Among the victims was one of Ahmadu's two little black babies.

Then a new dignitary turned up in the village. This was a speechifier, a recruiting-agent, and a nigger at that. He came from the towns; he was as

shrill and as spruce as a cock. He wore two *booboo*s, one on top of the other; *filosi* sandals, a red velvet cap and he also had a parasol. It was no easy matter to resist the eloquence of an official who was turned out like that, even though he was a nigger under the surface. He persuaded Ahmadu's eldest, Tiki, to enlist for the war which was on in France. France was kind enough to accept him as a soldier and present him with a superb new uniform and a rifle. France was quite willing that he should shew his gratitude by serving her; die for her, too, if the opportunity came.

Dazzled to find himself considered almost a Frenchman, Tiki signed on and went off.

So old Ahmadu and old Dziti were left all alone with the baby. They stared dismally at each other and pulled a face or two.

As other families in the village had suffered in the same way, there were some signs of animosity against the white overlords. But what could a handful of negroes, the mildest-natured of the mild, do to oppose the inrushing tide of European civilisation?

Years went by. And now Diakalu bid fair to become an important centre of colonisation. Large workshops and a factory were in process of development, and round them wandered the few remaining villagers, lean-cheeked and hollow-stomached, like so many exiles. Doctors still there were none—all the white men owned cars. But there was a wireless

set and, despite their sufferings, the negroes were fairly entranced by the stream of music and speeches that poured out of this trumpet.

One day, the one child left to Ahmadu and Dziti was taken ill—seriously ill—with the very same disease which had carried off his little brother. The old couple were nearly wild with grief; the only way to get help was to carry him to the nearest station, and to do that money was needed. But since every child in turn had flown, money there was none. How could they keep animals without shepherds? Their cupboard was bare. And this small child was their one remaining link with happiness—nay, with life.

One evening, while they were brooding in silence over their lot, a tall black stranger appeared before the door of their little hut.

It was Tiki, their son. But they did not recognise him.

For Rifleman Tiki was a very different person from the negro who had gone away, five years ago.

He had not been killed, like most of his comrades—Bassuru, Diara, Khalidu, Diallo and the rest (who shall tell over their tale?). He had not been killed, for there he was, standing at the door.

But he was disfigured. A jet of flame from a shell had burnt the skin off his face, laid bare one cheek-bone, his jawbone, too. Mutilated thus, he was beyond recognition.

But there was another change, of a different

order. For if this disfigured Bambara shepherd had lost some of his illusions, after rubbing shoulders for five years with Frenchmen in France, he had also acquired a quickness of mind utterly alien to him in the day when he had been as simple and unclad as a cave-dweller.

And so it came about that he had had an idea. He would not say at once: "I am Tiki." He would keep the delightful surprise in store for them. Delightful, you say? Why, certainly! for if he was disfigured—no great hardship, that—he was rich. He had a small fortune in his pocket—three hundred francs in French bank-notes. One or two of his chance finds among the ruins (for he had grown as resourceful as any European) included, among other precious objects, the jawbone of a German, garnished with golden teeth; this had been polished and made like new by a long sojourn in his haversack and had fetched in a good price.

If the truth be told, the heart of this home-comer from the battlefields of Artois and Champagne had beaten a little faster when, just a moment past, on the outskirts of the village, he had heard the yelping of the apes, become aware of the peculiar metallic rustling sound which palm leaves make when dry, as they rub and jostle together like metal foil. And how it had thumped when the tall cotton-trees, spreading their green and leafy vault over the village clearing, had come into view! But he was too proud of his ingenious idea to let the cat

out of the bag; he played his part and blinked his solitary eye.

Old Ahmadu and his wife received the passing guest in fitting manner, but it was in silence, and deep in their dream of despair, that they performed the rites of hospitality. In vain did the visitor try to make them talk. Then at last, to arouse their interest, unable to resist the desire to show that he was a multi-millionaire, he showed them the bank-notes which were rolled up in a handkerchief at the bottom of his haversack.

Then the old couple awoke from their dull torpor; one thought was in each single mind—if only we had some of this money, the little one dying in the next hut would be saved.

As Tiki had been walking all the night before and all through the day till nightfall to reach home, he felt sleepy. He gave a yawn, and at last dropped off to sleep, just where he was with the haversack beside him.

And once again, the old couple had the same thought: What if we took his money while he sleeps!

It was the old mother who took it, very quietly, while the father looked on; then both went out, shutting the door.

But when they were outside, Dziti said:

“If he wakes up he’ll take his money back and our child will die.”

And they shuddered at the thought, these two

old folk, their poor old minds set fast on one single thought—one thought alone, and nothing else besides; shuddered to think that the means of salvation might be torn out of their hands.

The old man heaped dry branches against the door of the little hut (itself made of dry branches) where the guest lay sleeping, set fire to them. Then they hurried away.

But in spite of themselves they came back to see, as dawn with uncertain strokes began to brush away the night.

A heap of burnt wood lay before them, still smoking in places, and on this black pile a charred body.

But something caught their eye on this blackened corpse. Look! On the chest, still fastened round the neck by a little chain—Tiki's amulet!

Tiki! Tiki! their son! The old couple fell to the earth, groaning as if their hearts would break, as they suddenly remembered—once more, the same thought—that the stranger's voice had indeed been like Tiki's. There on the ground they lay, hour after hour, awaiting the bitter end.

Then sounding through the air they heard a mighty voice, ringing loud as thunder. The wireless set, the loud-speaker was working.

And the words that they heard, these two pitiable creatures—two dark reefs thrusting out their heads above the ruin and desolation—were words

echoing in that same moment over the whole surface of the inhabited world; they were part of a speech by a Minister for French Colonies:

“And wherever France may tread, she brings in her hands not only the blessings of civilisation, but her love, her sisterly care, for the races of men!”

HOMECOMING

AMERICANS take a kindly interest in Mexico. They watch over it with utmost care, for it is a splendid country, copiously irrigated with petroleum, containing rich natural deposits in plenty.

Now, as everybody knows, these deposits are reserved for the Yanks, who have a fireproof-sky-scraper safe somewhere in Wall Street which is the largest safe in the World and grows full by the mere force of things. And so Americans are very careful to keep this fine land called Mexico free not only from the doctrine of independence, but also from the doctrine of revolution, which is like a bad version of the doctrine of independence because it builds up freedom on intelligent foundations.

But they find their hands pretty full, because the workers of Mexico are not at all tolerant of American penetration, and it happens that those who have evinced and proclaimed the determination to free the country from the yoke of the English-speaking races have always been very popular with the mass of the people. And a fair number of them

have so far been imprisoned by the Americans—and are kept shut up all the more tightly because, as everyone also knows, the people of Mexico have shown their teeth and begun to take control of their own affairs.

In 1913—that was thirteen years ago—a well-known Mexican rebel, José Rangel, was sentenced, together with another man whom I will call José Real, at the instance of the great republican democracy; the first to ninety-nine years' imprisonment, and the second for some three-quarters of a century. They were condemned, then, to die of old age, if one may use the expression, and they went into prison as others enter the cemetery.

Political prisoners of this type are indeed never pardoned.

But sometimes an exception is made which can be regarded either as an alleviation or as a refinement of the penalty. It happens—very rarely, it is true—still, it does happen and has been known to happen, that they are allowed to return home once only, provided they first give their word of honour to come back to prison at the time named. Needless to say, this favour, which has such an auspicious beginning and such a fateful end, is granted once—and never again.

Well, this is what happened to José Rangel and then to José Real.

As I have said, José Real was sentenced in 1913.

He was then forty years old, likewise Clemence, his wife. Saravia, his daughter, was eight when he disappeared from the world of the living, and his son Vincent ten. Since that day, the two children had grown up, married, and each had a child. And they all lived in the very same house in San Sebastiano where José Real had lived when a man.

They told him the news. "You are going to have one day at home. You will leave in the evening, but you will have to be back here the following night." And as he heard this, an overwhelming joy took entire possession of his heart.

Once again he was to see that calm and gentle soul, Clemence, the joyous partner of twenty years of married life, with all its ups and downs; and, instead of his little girl, a tall young woman; a fine strapping young man in place of his boy; two babies besides, his grandchildren, not to mention those who had become his son and daughter-in-law. Yes, incredible as it all sounded, it was true. Now he would see, would feel, what occasional letters had feebly tried to shew him, in a clumsy, shapeless void of words. "A child has been born and christened Arturo; also another called Michael. . . . They are growing . . . they are pretty." In short, everything that letters tell without telling us anything, especially when they come from good folk whose fingers don't know how to chatter.

And in all this life he would join, live life to the

full during an endless stretch of time—one long day!

The happiness that had come to him was all the keener because the adventure had been so long in coming; for months and months there had been talk of it and he had been dreaming of it, eating his head off with longing, wearing himself out with alternate hope and despair.

When the day was arranged—and he was a changed man, transfigured in glory—he debated, first of all, whether he should warn his friends of his coming, or whether he should just calmly turn up one evening and say: “Here I am; I should like a bite of something,” just as in old days, when he used to come in from the wood-yard, and in the same old voice.

But he reflected that to risk a surprise would be too dangerous: supposing they just happened to be away! Or any other little hitch, say. No, far better send warning. And he did so.

He left the prison one day at three in the afternoon. He was to return next day at sunset (these were the long summer days). But he never gave a moment’s thought to that day’s end which would be the end of everything.

How strange it was to walk so freely on the street pavement after thirteen years without practice, to be able to wave a hand to right and left without knocking up against a wall, and, on looking up, this

way or that, to pierce the light of the open sky to its very depths!

He was not very firm on his legs and things were quick to dance before his eyes. The passers-by said: "He must be convalescing," and they weren't far wrong.

He had calculated that by taking the train, and then the high road, he would reach home about eight, at nightfall. He would then see the dear faces grouped in the light of day before the lamps were lit, and that would be so much more to the good.

While travelling in the train, he suddenly felt dizzy, and very tired. And as they rumbled quickly on, he had to close his eyes, much as they longed to watch the landscape and take it all in, without missing one single detail.

So he never noticed that a traveller who had got in with him was glancing towards him now and then. He had seen the traveller's face plainly enough a little while ago, but never noticed—overwhelmed as he was, and beset with the great world—that he knew the face, that the man was a police inspector—whose duty it was to remind him of his oath, should he fail to return as he had sworn to do. For prison and governmental authorities have no great faith in the truthfulness and honour of men—they don't know the real meaning of such sentiments. Still, this inspector was a tactful officer

and was pretending hard to be thinking of other things.

At last José got out of his train. Six o'clock! He had about two hours of walking before him—a trifle for an ordinary man, but not for a prisoner suddenly landed high and dry out of a prison inferno and only able to pace a small circle round a little court-yard for the last thirteen years.

In this wide open space, intersected by the road, he felt an overmastering desire for sleep. He had lived through too much afresh in this one half-day.

The tired dog in him was drawing him earthwards, closing his eyes. He could not, as it were, resist himself. He lay down under a wooden hut standing near by, without even taking the time to reflect that he should have told them to come and fetch him in some trap or other, that this would have meant a great saving of such precious hours. But he was too sleepy to think of anything, and if there were tears in his eyes, it was because he was yawning so. His mouth still gaped in a yawn as he sank into heavy sleep.

When he woke, the sun was already up. A pang of hunger drove him quickly to his feet. He was fresh as a daisy now, but a slice of the day was already gone, *sangre de la Madona!* Off he set at a run, heading for the suburb where his house lay. But he simply could not keep up the pace, and reconciled himself to a quick walk.

From this point began a line of workmen's houses, little detached villages and huts; San Sebastiano stretches out in one long line along the main road. Here and there, houses in clumps. He was coming to one of these little colonies. It was still a good two or three miles to his house.

But as he drew near, a figure loomed in the doorway of one of the houses, and seeing him, threw up both arms.

"José!"

It was Santander, his companion of old days in suffering, in the fight.

"José! I knew your face! So it's you, then?"

Standing there motionless, with voice half-choked by the haste of his journey, and by a sort of bar that lay across his heart, José replied quite simply:

"It's me."

"I knew your face!" Santander shouted, louder than ever. "You haven't changed much. Besides, Clemence your wife told us you were coming," he added; "she was here actually last night, thinking that you'd be here sooner. But as she saw no one coming, she went home when dark came on."

And only a few steps away from the place where he had dropped down to sleep! If he had known that Clemence's arms were waiting for him there, he would easily have walked a minute or two longer.

While they were talking, friends and comrades of old times had come out of house doors; up went their arms, too, in amazement. Now they drew near, shouting in chorus, and their eyes rolled under their swarthy brows. They even had tears in their eyes as they seized hold of José, kissed him, clapped him to their fond and manly chests.

Women, too, were gathering round. And the children round about had stopped their play and were watching the scene.

Even Father Léonte was there—José hadn't been on good terms with him in old days. Father Léonte had grown round and fat, and his thick underlip seemed to have been rubbed quite recently in fresh butter. He smiled and waved his hands, but something a little sly and unpleasant still lingered in his eye.

“José! Come in! A drop of wine!”

A drop of wine offered on such an occasion was not a thing to be refused; besides, it would give him strength.

“Yes. But only one glass, and I'll drink it standing. Then I must be off.”

“Yes, yes, they're expecting you at home.”

None the less, he yielded to the entreaties of his friends and sat down (for he was already tired after covering this tiny stretch of road and his body felt the need to relax), while Santander's wife rushed off to find bottles.

"Come on, old chap, just one more."

Glasses, questions and exclamations clinked together in the little room.

"There! Now I must be off."

Then he found he simply couldn't get up.

His head was dizzy with the three glasses he had drunk. In desperation, to put heart into him and life into his legs, he poured himself out a fourth glass, brimful, and swallowed it down at a gulp. The effect was as if an axe had thundered down on the back of his head, and he understood vaguely what a crime he had just committed.

The friends standing round asked: "What's the matter with him?" and were mystified—for it isn't so easy as all that to understand what it's like, to stay shut up in a cage for years and years and only eat soaked beans and watery soups and drink nothing but water. And the four glasses he had drunk produced the same effect on him as four pitchers-full would on an ordinary wayfarer.

His brain seemed to be in a pulp, and though he was sitting down, he put out both hands to stop himself from falling. The heads and shoulders round him doubled and trebled, and the smile of welcome on their mouths spread out and out, away to the horizon; the walls slanted and the people passing to and fro made zig-zags in the air, and then were blotted out.

But the worst thing of all was that to begin with,

he remained clear-headed enough on the surface, on top of it all, to understand what a gulf he had tumbled into.

A fit of fury came over him. He rose and yelled. But the sudden outburst choked him and he fell back into his seat.

Then up he got once more, head straining towards the door and the road, the look of a damned soul in his eyes.

They rushed towards him, supported him. Now they understood. They were ashamed, they were horror-struck and yet they weren't to blame and they were innocent. They hadn't stopped to think, and that was how the harm was done.

José clung to the door-post, supported by Pablo.
"The air will do him good."

But the air, in its turn, turned traitor in all innocence, and instead of blowing away the intoxication which a few glasses had instilled into the home-comer's oversensitive brain, it only fanned the flames within.

A woman was standing on her door-step, on the other side of the road.

"Clemence!" he said.

She was not Clemence, but so strong was his desire to go to her that his friends helped him across the road.

The woman was frightened; her face turned white. She was trembling; she would have liked to run away, but didn't dare to.

He talked long to her, in supplicating tones.

"What, don't you recognise me? Where are the kiddies and the tiny 'uns? Where are they hiding? Let's have a look at them."

His friends tried to pull him together by yelling all sorts of objurgations into his ears. Some shook him roughly, other implored him, not knowing which was the wisest course. The uproar was deafening.

Father Léonte stood a little to one side, behind the group, watching it all with a wicked little smile.

Meanwhile a young woman had come down the road from Sebastiano. Her face was all smiles as she arrived. Seeing the gathering there, her face grew brighter still. "He's there!" she said to herself. When she saw the wretched blear-eyed, slack-kneed man who was struggling there, she screamed aloud.

The sound of that voice had a strange effect on José Real's senses. We have heard of the 'voice of the blood' and perhaps there is something in the phrase, for he instantly calmed down and looked towards her.

But the young woman had covered her tear-stained face with her hands, so that the father could not see the lingering traces of little Saravia's childish features, and he looked away. Nor did he see the little child clinging to his mother's blue skirt, hiding behind her, in sudden fright.

And then a kind of evil dream or hallucination came over him. He thought that he was standing before a door and that they would not open for him.

“Open the door, darling, it’s me,” he cried, clasping both hands.

Then he collapsed on a boundary stone. Round him the folks rushed to and fro, literally not knowing what to do; they held him, to prevent his falling and hurting himself. But those who stayed with him there—the rest had been compelled to go away to their work—were unable, do what they could for hours and hours, to rouse him from his torpid condition.

At last, the moment came when the individual who had travelled with him and shadowed him came up and explained that it was time for him to go back to catch his train. They had to carry him to the station in a carriage. Thence the train would bear him almost to the prison gates, which would never open to let him out again until he came forth “feet first,” as French workmen say.

He collapsed in a corner of the carriage and slept. But while he slept, his face suddenly lit up. And no doubt he accomplished in that dream what he had failed to do in life. That was the only path to happiness left to José Real—that victim of his own wretchedness and of the clumsy, well-meant kindness of his brothers in wretchedness.

BLOOD IN THE OIL-CANS

BILLY PEW's a regular boozier. I can't abide the man—because he's Billy Pew to begin with; again, because he's a very common type nowadays, vulgar, worthless, teeming everywhere, infesting life as well as literature.

The type flourishes in both hemispheres, like those diseases now called international, but it is especially to be found in the United States, where bait abounds. Billy Pew is the millionaire's jack-of-all-trades (he is rolling in millions himself now), ready for any job, and with dozens already to his credit—spy, hired desperado, go-between and abettor of big business men—under the perpetual urge of one strong instinct, a frantic greed for dollars. A hard worker too, as keen as he is devoid of principles.

In his time he has been a groom, a cowboy, a vagabond, a saloon keeper, a gaol-bird, a company promoter. And so often has he grown rich and gone bankrupt, then rich again, that he really seems to wear two faces; you can never tell whether it's the millionaire or the rogue that you're meeting.

I often see him sitting in the bright green interior of the little pub jutting out over the harbour at the street corner. Here, in this picturesque old-world corner of England, he sits for hours at a stretch, for he's an inveterate drunkard into the bargain. Why, you will ask, do I go into this bar to cultivate his society? Not for drinks, nor to look at him; he has an ugly face and drinking doesn't agree with me. But though far from talkative as a rule, Billy Pew opens out in his cups, and men of that kind can sometimes give you peeps into the amazing facts of contemporary life which are as impenetrable to the uninitiated as any safe.

Such facts interest me; I go about collecting them.

Well, that day, Billy Pew had imbibed a varied sequence of cocktails—a complete rainbow, in little glasses. He was perched on a high chair, leaning over the bar counter, facing the entrance. His eyes watered a little, bedewing his red pyramid of a face. His raw-beef neck was much more ample than his forehead, crowned with its tiny cap. His boxer's fists (he had figured in the ring in his time) propped that face on either side and the cheek-bones were as angular and prominent as those contrived on canvas by cubist painters.

I had a newspaper in my hand and shewed him an American cablegram which mentioned a case about some murdered Redskins which was shortly

to be heard in court at Tulsa in Oklahoma. I had reason to know that this individual had had some hand in the business. So my friend Bill, impelled by the magic workings of alcohol, had begun taking me into his confidence, and that, with specimens of his type, means giving things away.

When I shewed the newspaper to my tough friend his face brightened up. His spacious jaw, which was decked with a mosaic of yellow ivory and golden cubes, widened out into the fleshy zones of his ears.

"That was a cute bit of work they did there," he said.

"Who did?"

"Who? Why, the guys who see all the big jobs through." And his massy fist indicated the ceiling, to signify the lords on high, the mysterious powers that be.

"And so they'll have to answer questions at the trial?" I asked.

"You bet they don't worry any of the bosses." And he pulled a face indicative of great respect for them and great contempt for me.

"Same here," he added, "I don't worry."

And that was how he was led to spin the yarn in this English tavern, showing not the slightest regard for the nigger, the Chinaman and the two sailors who were dug in there, deep in ponderous ecstasy.

"It's a petroleum affair—the Redskins were mixed up with it."

"Petroleum?"

"Yep. Oklahoma—bully state it is, square-shaped, plump in the centre of the Union—has gallons of petroleum down under in that same Tulsa district," said Billy Pew, laying a huge paw on the newspaper I had brought.

"And the Redskins?"

"Well, you know there are some left; call themselves Redskins but they're only chocolate colour. They've been gradually cleared out of the better districts—swept up and tucked away in nice airy parks. Reserves we call them.

"They began to die out, driven back by American civilisation, same as the whales and elephants; till at last you could have said: 'Soon they'll all be gone and we'll be rid of 'em.' Yes, this two-footed race went on dwindling so long as they tried to keep up their race traditions, their pride and high-brow airs. Then, they made a start on civilisation themselves—took up English and wearing hats and going to mass and making money. Ever since then the race has stopped dying out and is recovering lost ground, though, of course, it's nothing like the grand old times when the Algonquins, Iroquois and Sioux bossed the prairies and were free to scalp any adventurer from the Union.

"In Oklahoma, there was a Reserve full of these

half-respectable and half-civilised savages. And behind the fences they've got well-stocked hunting grounds where they can kick their heels as much as they want and stick any amount of feathers on their heads, like their noble ancestors, and dance in a ring round their deerskin tents and huts and medicine men and fat oily mammas what carry children like bundles on their backs. And, take it from me, there were some lordly looking fellows in the crowd, with a bearing that many a Pale Face might have envied—Pale Face is the name they give to Yankees and Europeans in general, though some of them—me, for instance—are more in the red way," added Bill, making this comment just as I looked at his fresh-meat face and made it for myself.

"But somebody," he went on, "came in to spoil the fun. That somebody was me. I was just coming out after a period of enforced rest, prescribed by the judges of Ohio after a public debate which took up some time and was in all the papers of the day. And now that I was a free man again, I had to take up something new, and I chose to become an oil prospector. I had first-rate qualifications for the job; Willy Sharp shewed me how before he went West (people said I killed him, but they could never prove it on me).

"My nose took me up the Canadian River, Tulsa way, and there we found traces of petroleum. I say

we, because there were several of us, worse luck! and every man jack well armed and very suspicious of his pals and with eyes in the back of his head.

“The claim was plump inside the Indian Reserves. There was no hope of pretending it wasn’t; it was theirs by right of American law, and down in black and white, more’s the pity.

“That was in 1907. Off I went with maps in my pocket and soon I was back, bringing my brother Tom Pew, which was the occasion of him and me falling out. (They said I swindled him, but that’s a mere libel and I don’t listen to it much, seeing as how the Statute of Limitations applies now.) I had one or two Big Bugs with me, too.

“They were the sort of guys that do everything with the help of two talismans they keep in their pockets—a fountain-pen and a cheque-book. They were the men behind the big thing. And take Billy Pew’s word for it, I looked a fool beside those chaps, whatever police officers and prosecutors and public may think to the contrary.

“They came and saw, and all in one time and one movement, felt for their cheque-books: they’d got to get square with the Red Indians who were the genuine owners of the claim, beyond all doubt.

“But the Redskins had got just enough of a modern polish on to understand that their game was not to sell their rights on the nail for a cash

price much lower, of course, than the value of the goods, even though they were underground and you couldn't very well smell 'em as yet, let alone see 'em. Oh! they knew the guiding rule of civilised people: good business means a share in the profits. If they had only known, the poor blighters, they'd have seen that that was just the way they were going to be had. . . . But there now! What am I saying? Mustn't anticipate.

"The Redskins were just as obstinate and incapable of changing their minds as the great posts chopped into the shape of images and painted green and red which stand before the openings of their wigwams. 'Share in profits! Share in profits!' they went on, calm and patient. They didn't even seem to hear all the grand speeches we were turning out (I took my turn) to persuade them to be had by the big bosses. There was nothing for it; while we were cursing and they kept on smiling, a contract was drawn up and signed agreeing to the development of the petroleum claim on a fifty-fifty profits basis, between the Company and the owners of the land.

"There were twenty-six land owners mentioned by name in the agreement and, my word! it was a funny sight to see the signatures of such famous and highly honoured financial and industrial magnates stuck down along with a crowd of names like George Big Heart or Willy Piercing Eye!

"They got to work at once on the claim. And the Indian parks were invaded by a regular army of he-men—engineers, business men, business agents, guards, gangs of expert workmen, as well as masons, carpenters and other builders, together with the complement indispensable to this army on campaign—the feeding and drinking departments. A sort of town sprang up like a bed of mushrooms on these plains, where a few days before you could see bisons and wapitis as plain as I see you. There were offices, stores, workshops, caravanserais, with first, second and third class sleeping accommodation, just like the liners, and a money exchange bureau run by big toughs just like any police officer or saloon-keeper (ha! we still had saloons in those days in the States, and you could buy a bit of everything).

"There were some free fights, various shindies, cleaned up in a few rounds by the police; a negro was lynched and a tender young squaw was carried off—just like any big white man's country it was. It also happened that the Indians took to some of the white man's pet amusements, womanising in particular, and certain white men thought well to behave like savages because they thought the Indians savages. That's what they call peaceful penetration. But there now; don't let's start philosophizing!

"The sinking of the oil wells went on fast. The

claim promised a fine yield and looked like being inexhaustible. The pumping from the oil wells sunk all over the plain, looking just like a new city growing up under scantlings, and the rush of oil down the pipe-lines never seemed to slack off.

“Likewise, bundles of dollars poured into the hands of the twenty-six Redskins; this went on for years and still they were twenty-six.

“But one day, miles away in New York, where stood the innermost shrine, that is to say an office with a bureau and a telephone on it, a gentleman (I won’t utter his name in vain) stopped going through accounts and cablegrams, and said: ‘Fifteen years, 161 million barrels of unrefined petroleum, and 13 million dollars paid over to the native owners of the petroleum fields. These fellows aren’t wanted.’

“The secretary standing there, as silent and motionless as the telephone receiver, thereupon said, ‘All right, sir.’

“It was an order this man had given, for he was one of to-day’s world emperors, even though they did call him ‘sir’ by an old democratic custom.

“Some time after, in that same year 1923, there came a day when the chiefs of the tribe sat waiting in their gayest clothes for one, by name Great Heart, who was to go out hunting with them. Great Heart was late, an utterly unusual thing with Redskins, who are mad on punctuality. The end of it

was that Great Heart never turned up. So they went off to his wigwam in Indian file and found him in the death throes, his face terribly distorted as though from inside, surrounded by screeching women and frantic medicine men. And soon after his mighty frame, which looked enormous as it lay stretched out, had breathed its last.

"Poisoned he had been beyond all doubt, but whose hand had poured the drug and whose the arm that guided the hand? Those who knew betrayed no sign. Great Heart was one of the petroleum field proprietors. So now there were only twenty-five.

"And the very next thing that happened was a hunting accident, which very nearly brought them down to twenty-four.

"There was a crowd of them—Redskins and Pale Faces—chasing the quarry. One of the white hunters following behind fired a shot and sent his bullet into the thigh of the Indian galloping on ahead of him, instead of into. . . . Damn clumsy fellow!

"Where are the good old days when it was so easy for the bosses to get rid of twenty-five superfluous men? In this generation you can only do that sort of thing in wartime, and it was peace time then, worse luck!

"One of my pals, whose head was a regular box of tricks, said: 'What about a conspiracy? Supposing we get 'em mixed up in a conspiracy to under-

mine the Government and Civilisation in general?" You know how often the conspiracy stunt's used in all countries; sure thing, mops 'em up every time. You discover a conspiracy, with all sorts of horrible details, and that not only does in the undesirables but makes all honest citizens say: 'They deserved what they got,' and, 'What a good Government we have!'

"To work up a conspiracy all you need, as you know, is one or two artists—handwriting experts, as you might say, to prepare the incriminating documents, and a few eloquent preachers to set the ball rolling towards national independence or anarchy. You bet we had 'em both within easy reach, and soon we had persuasive fellows at work among the petroleum tribe, patiently explaining to the Indians how much it would be to their interest if they shook off the oppressive yoke of the Americans; for instance, they could have a bomb (a receipt for one was offered) and use it to blow up some public monument in the district.

"But they were up against it. The Redskins wouldn't take on, the swine! And yet no one was asking them to go right through with it; all that was wanted was that they should show a bit of interest in the idea. But it was no go. They wouldn't tumble to it, and stuck pretty close together.

"And actually this happened: our very best sedition man used up so much spittle shouting out revo-

lutionary doctrines that he went off his chump, by which I mean that he turned revolutionary in earnest. Would you believe it? Here was a fellow who had always been squarely dealt with by the rich, and blest if he doesn't wear arrow-head suit-ing now, all because he expressed revolutionary opinions rather more loudly than he should.

"And so there were still twenty-five owners left, rolling in wealth, and honest Injuns at that!

"You've heard of the Ku Klux Klan? They're a very respectable crowd; lots of rich men's sons, in particular, and young bloods out for sport and ex-citement, who've banded together in the South, first with the idea of knocking out Catholics and lynching negroes, and next, as their programme of reform grew wider in scope, with an eye to keep-ing the upper hand over the scum who claim to live on equal terms with acquired wealth. These Protestant Patriots can boast, like the Fascist gentle-men—they're the Yankee brand—of a certain number of acts which you can describe, if you like, as crimes, and, in addition to that, of picturesque processions in which they figure in white hoods.

"Well, they got up one of these processions in the already presentable town stretching along the line of petroleum wells which look so like skeleton towers. The Indians were looking on. It reminded them of their ancestral ceremonies on a bigger and blacker scale. But when the procession was over,

somehow or other—why was never discovered—a scrimmage began. Colts were popping right and left. Bullets whistled in dozens past hoods and police helmets. When the excitement died down, there were three citizens lying on the ground. They were three Indians—three petroleum field proprietors. So now there were only twenty-two.

“This affair led to some uneasiness and even to a certain amount of unrest. To clear the air and to give them something else to think about, the Company, always anxious to keep every man amused and happy (seeing in it too, perhaps, a perfectly legitimate publicity stunt) decided to ‘shoot’ a film in the district. This film was to be made with the help of Indians, workmen, employees, and the entire population, grouped round two film stars—a splendid star of the masculine order and a dazzling light of the female species.

“It was then,” said Billy Pew (proudly his voice rose one point), “that I came on the scene.

“The whole business was put in my hands. I should explain that by this time—that’s three years ago—I was a film producer.

“I got hold of a good scenario. As they made no bones about the Dollars, I went to the biggest of all the scenario men. His name . . . let’s see . . . let’s see. . . . I can’t remember it for the moment, but you know it sure enough. He wrote me up a peach of a thing. The title alone was miles out of

the ordinary and quite sensational—*The Virgin of Tulsa*. You know what a genius the Americans have for films. The most splendid and original of all ideas come from them. The big swell I had gone to had surpassed himself and I was the proud owner of a scenario unrivalled for intensity and novelty by any other. Judge for yourself: A young white girl is carried off by some Indians who are annoyed by the industrial enterprises of a millionaire philanthropist, father to the pretty young lady. To horse, then! Off they go in pursuit of the ravishers, riding away with their prey. They must be caught before they scalp the golden-haired heroine. Now, all the interest and originality of this super film lay in this chase through all kinds of obstacles. They pass through floods, through fire, over mountains and plains and even over a train in motion. At last the Indians are surrounded, at the very moment when the chief sorcerer has his knife to the scalp of the angelic victim. They are shot down with rifles and the child is saved by her father and fiancé.

"The parts were assigned, the scenes were staged. The Redskins caught on like anything. There were several rehearsals of the final scene. When all was ready, they 'shot' this scene. Ralph, the photographer,—he was a fat chap with spectacles—was hard at it, and while he turned and snapped the acrobatics and graces of the male star and the female star—both on horseback, of course—and the

troops of horsemen thundering downhill like avalanches, he yelled and cursed and applauded and sweated like a child streaming with tears.

"In the final fusillade, this photographer (how he had his work at heart) as he went on turning, stormed away:

"'My Redskin band's a goner!' he cried. 'These fellows don't know how to act. They're duds. They don't know how to fall, these blasted Indians! That's not the way to fall. They tumble like fools. Put some professionals in their place, for God's sake!'"

"The fact was, these Redskins who were playing the part of the final victims seemed curiously clumsy and unnatural as they fell from the saddle, under the avenging fire of the heroic little band led by the millionaire and the fiancé.

"But at last the scene came to an end, in some fashion or other.

"But gee! the men on the ground were lying still.

"And blood was flowing round them.

"They had fallen clumsily, but sure enough they were dead. And there were twelve in all.

"In a flash, the awful truth, the frightful accident became clear: all unawares—without anyone knowing a word—the actors who were playing the part of the pursuers had not used blank cartridges; their rifles were loaded!

"I leave you to imagine the despair that I showed

on this new style battlefield. I tore out my hair in handfuls in the sight of all, I smote my breast, I cursed myself for not examining the cartridges—but who could have guessed that these blank cartridges were not blanks—and groaned out that I was undone, disgraced forever. Then off I staggered, letting it be known that I was going to surrender to the judges, or do worse than that—for I held myself to blame for this sudden catastrophe which had cost the life of twelve petroleum shareholders.

“But a friend came to see me in my little home, where I was roaming up and down like a caged lion, half crazy. I talked of committing suicide. Other people arrived and I talked louder still. But they told me to come back to my senses, and at last I calmed down a bit.

“An inquiry was held. The close resemblance of the packages of blank and loaded cartridges and the circumstances which had led to the mistake were so convincing, and so stoutly did I maintain that I had acted in good faith and in all innocence, that my defence was upheld by the sheriff and the verdict was in my favour.

“But I left the district to take up a post in a big New York firm as head of the litigation department, with a handsome salary attached.

“It was while there that I heard that an angry wind was shaking the Red Indian tribe and that the ten remaining shareholders were in a terrible

state of excitement. The trouble was mostly due to the shindy kicked up in person by one of their number, Harry Roan by name. He actually went so far as to accuse the Company openly of doing away with the Indians, to rob them of their share in the profits!

“Suddenly he disappeared. Eleven days after his body was found riddled with bullets, in an abandoned motor, by the roadside.

“And so there were nine, you say? No, that’s where you’re out. There wasn’t a single one left. For when Roan was found in this plight the whole tribe, seized with panic, gathered up tents, horses, baggage and women folk and fled into the mountains, cleared off the scene, leaving the whites sole masters of the oil-wells.

“And now, when I’ve settled in England and shaken off the dust of the United States, that country where man’s most sacred right—the right to quench his thirst, has been violated; now, when I’m even seriously thinking—I don’t mind letting you into the secret—of becoming a religious man and a churchgoer—I learn from the newspapers that, after three years, this affair is coming up before Tulsa Courts. God’s blessing on judges and witnesses too, but you don’t expect me to keep up the interest in this stale old affair?”

Billy Pew wanted to add a rider, and urged by some proud impulse did so:

"If ever they find out who poisoned and shot those Indians—*well, they won't find 'em out that way.*

"Believe me, my friend," Bill added by way of conclusion and farewell, "literary blokes aren't the only people in this world with powerful imaginations; there are others who can see a plot right through."

THE RED MAID

ONCE there was a little country school-mistress and the children swirled round her like farm-yard chickens. She was slender as a willow wand, and had dark, dark eyes and hair.

In those eyes of hers, once, celestial light, angelic visions had come and gone; and who knows? perhaps she had heard voices too.

From this school in Lorraine one could see the tower of Audeloncourt church, which lies not so far away from Domrémy church; and there in its shade once lived a shepherdess who might have been compared with this shepherdess of children. But Joan of Arc had lived in the days of Charles VII, five hundred years ago, while Louise lived under Napoleon III.

Such was the honesty of those who had reared her, and such her native honesty, that she had come to free herself of superstition, dismissed for ever the phantoms in which she had once believed. And now she only believed in the terror and the marvel of real things. Her dreams, her pity, and her keen bright eyes, were all given for the cause of human suffering and no longer found delight in the fairy-

tales with which old faith has lulled and charmed the childish minds of men. Her religion looked to another world. She clung in devotion to life itself.

She devoted herself more to the suffering of all than to the sufferings of a few—to the freedom of her race. And her love for the oppressed was first seen in her hatred of the potentate who held France in servitude.

Morning and evening, she made her pupils sing the *Marseillaise*. One Sunday, in the village church, when the priest saying Mass up on his gilded dais let fall the consecrated phrase: '*Domine salvum fac Napoleonum*', a loud noise was suddenly heard in the body of the church—the clatter of little sabots on the stone floor. All the school-mistress's little pupils were running out of church in a panic of fear, because she had taught them that it was a sin to pray for the Emperor.

Inspectors and prefects rolled eyes in fury, summoned her before them, threatened her. But she had learned from the legends of her childhood never to be afraid of demons, even when they appear in flesh and blood.

So she went on educating the generation to be in the way they should go. But she longed to go to Paris to do the same on a more ambitious scale.

To Paris she went, being one of those who translate their dreams into action when they can, and even when they cannot quite.

She reached the 'City of Light' at that time when great industrial enterprises, and the mighty concentration of capital, and fever of great financial battles were beginning their day. Paris was one wild whirlwind of pleasure and debauchery, of corruption, of bad style in gilt. Its beating heart was in stone—the Bourse—and next to the financiers (those princes of the blood)—came the lords and ladies of the Court and the artists who kept them flattered and beguiled.

Under this upper layer of society was another, rather more crushed, where grave and serious artists and learned men were at work. And again below that, another layer, much more crushed, which hoped and conspired—the republicans of that day. In their hearts they hated the Empire and the Emperor. They included politicians and idealists of all kinds and shades of opinion, and even genuine bourgeois, too, but one and all turned a single front to their common enemy, that monster the Emperor.

Among this group—exiles in the very heart of their country—this tender-hearted rationalist, this mystic with a logician's mind, found her combative spirit of revolt both strengthened and quickened. For this was a secret little circle of fiery souls, comparable to those bands hidden away in the catacombs in the days when Christianity was a people's religion, ground under the Roman heel. Later,

when speaking of this period in her life, she would say: "We kept our eyes fixed ahead, well ahead." She led the austere and ascetic life of a poor school-mistress, bought old clothes and boots in the Temple Square in little second-hand dealers' shops. She incurred debts because she used to buy books, and above all because she bent in pity over every victim, every sufferer. She who had given her all to the cause of revolution could not but give freely to others of all that was in her hands, her head, her heart. And if she ever had tender feelings other than for her mother they were never revealed—even though stories will have it otherwise—and doubtless she was reluctant to confess them even to herself.

Then came the Franco-German War: then the defeat and the fall of the Empire. Afterwards came that great upheaval of a martyred people—The Commune. Now was revealed the treachery of those bourgeois republicans who were 'democrats' only in so far as they were opposed to that half-caricature, the descendant of Napoleon I. Now came the bitter deception: men learned the perfidy of those whose 'solid front' was solely turned against the Emperor. Now that the bourgeoisie themselves were enthroned, their one thought was to be rid of the common people; fear and hatred could plainly be read in their eyes.

This little school-mistress, dark-eyed and dark-

robed, threw herself body and soul into the Communard cause. She preached revolt and organised it. Dressed in men's clothes and gun in hand, she went down into the mud of the trenches, into the hail of bullet and grape-shot. She was Revolution incarnate, now that she knew bourgeois liberalism to be a hollow mockery, and understood the hideous hypocrisy that had moved the great bourgeois republican, Jules Favre, to embrace her theatrically in public, at the same time as Ferré, before the crowd—the better to choke the life out of them both and out of those that stood behind them, with his Judas kiss.

In the defeat that followed, in the suppression of that revolt, she played her full part and more. Only a miracle saved her from the rifles, machine-guns and bayonets of the army of Established Order, from the drunken hordes of the 'avengers' let loose in Paris, insulting, striking, torturing and killing haphazard in the streets. And sometimes even the crowd, poisoned by the vile catch-words of 'peace and order', heaped insults on the vanquished.

For all these poor creatures and tools, who know not what they do, she shewed her pity; pity, too, for those who carried out the orders of the blood-thirsty régime—pity wide and deep, such as is bred of intelligence. When she saw the pale-faced Bretons firing on the Communards, she said:

“These men do not understand. They have been taught that they must fire on the people, and they believe it; they are believers. Money, at least, is not their inducement. Some day they can be won over by being taught to believe in justice. *Above all, we have need of those who do not sell their services.*”

She escaped, then, but surrendered to the soldiers of Versailles that her mother might be released. And like so many of her compatriots, she went through hell at Satory, the Communards’ slaughterhouse. With the rest of the herd, she was driven in. In the cell where she lay awaiting death, vermin swarmed in such masses on the ground that they were audible there; and when thirst and fever tortured her, the only water that she had to drink came from a bloody pool in which the murderous soldiery washed their hands. Through a little window her eyes beheld the whole scene. Dimly through the darkness and streaming rain she could see little knots of men here and there, falling in answer to the flashes and detonations, to swell the heaps of corpses already bestrewing the ground.

When she stood before the Summary Court of Versailles—a butcher’s tribunal—she did her best to be condemned to death. This was her reasoning: I can still be of help to the Cause, but the Cause would be helped yet more if they shot me; to exe-

cute a woman would bring Versailles into public discredit.

She made no loud-sounding speeches. Her declaration of faith was brief, admirably clear and self-contained; she ended with these words: "I have spoken. Condemn me to death if you are not cowards." So impressive was this display of deliberate self-sacrifice that exclamations of astonishment and surprise burst from some lips, notably from Victor Hugo's. To these men on the safe side of the barricades was revealed, as in a flash, the simple, the superhuman heroism and the wonder of revolt. But these few were quick to avert their faces. None the less, the officers did not dare to condemn her to death and banished her instead to New Caledonia.

Long years passed. It was a strange passage in her life, this captivity in forgotten isles of the Antipodes, where she proselytised the servile cannibal race of the Canaques, taught them to lift their heads to a higher moral code of freedom, having taken the trouble to master the dialects of these 'savages.' In the intervals, during the dreadful hours of idleness enforced by deportation, she studied natural science, and even made some curious and remarkable discoveries.

Then she came back to France. It was the time of the dawn of working-men's socialism and class

syndicalism. She joined forces with the anarchists, never, however, losing sight of the true needs of revolution. "For if it does not utterly destroy the old order," she said, "we shall have to begin everything all over again."

Soon came stirring and stormy political meetings, when she rose to her feet and cried to the proletariat: "If you want a place in the sun, do not ask for it—take it." She was imprisoned, transferred again and again, maltreated, outraged. For long she refused a pardon, and only accepted it at last to go to the side of her mother's death-bed.

She went to London, and there, while preaching the cause of the suffering and oppressed, a fanatic fired at her, but only wounded her slightly in the head. She undertook the defence of her would-be assassin, and pleaded for acquittal before the Court. "He was not responsible," she said, "for the evil instincts implanted in him by the vile propaganda of a disgraceful régime."

Once again her attitude aroused astonishment, amazement, gave some of her hearers a glimpse into the deeps that underlie the revolutionary cause. But most of her contemporaries found it simpler and cleverer not to understand.

And indeed no living soul has been less understood than this woman. Hers was too great a spirit to be seen as it truly was. And if those who were able to be near her venerated, adored her and

understood, every one of them faded away, for they were humble creatures; legend alone remained to tell of that profound and living reality.

Only with the present day comes truer recognition; we begin to see how her figure, through all tragic circumstance, was the veritable embodiment of the people's revolutionary cause, of the cry of liberty, crimson-lipped. For she taught the people to beware of the demagogery of mock democrats and bourgeois; was warm-hearted, clear-headed enough to proclaim that only by violence can chains be broken.

And when, later on, the sculptor's chisel sets to work, white marble shall commemorate that enthusiast's face, bright with intelligence and strength of will—black marble that dark dress she always wore. For here was one who hoped on through despair, who never spoke harshly of the future and believed in it always; who foresaw beyond the revolution of 1905—the year of her death—the coming liberation of the peoples of Russia.

But even now, while the hearts of the masses, who know and feel, enshrine her name, the homage of others has immortalised her—I speak of the fierce, the furious and indecent hatred of so-called respectable people: the Shrew, the Firebrand, the Monster with Human Face—such are the names that many generations of bourgeois have set beside the name of Louise Michel.

JESUS EXPLOITED

FOR some time past I have undertaken to tell my comrades—Russian, French and others: in a word, my comrades—true stories. For my subjects I go to reality itself, and never change a single essential detail. And so these little tragedies or comedies that I tell them are freshly drawn from the living texture of truth.

The story that I give them now is one of this kind—it is the story of Jesus. For years I have tried to discern the real outlines of this great passing figure through the veils of mystic tradition and imagination. I have carefully studied the Gospels and Holy Scriptures in which use is made of his thought and his personality. Filled with pious zeal for the truth, I have followed the labours of *savants* who have worked with independence of judgment and intellectual honesty upon the sources of Christianity, much as archæologists work among the spacious ruins of Thebes or Troy. Drawing upon my own sincerity and respect for truth, I have been bold enough to write a Gospel, which I called the Restored Gospel, because it restores to Jesus his vast yet humble rôle and to men their

true greatness, of which they had alike been robbed by Religion.

This, then, is the word of the past for those who have ears to hear it.

In Galilee, about the Roman year 800—nineteen hundred years ago—lived a humble Jewish prophet who preached to the people.

He held no large place in history. He preached for a few months only, perhaps only for a few weeks. Not a single historian, whether Roman or Jew, who deals with this period even in detail refers to him, not a single contemporary speaks of this Jesus. For his hatred of rich men and priests shone out around him. He mingled with the poor, with slaves, with women in bondage, with the sufferers and the oppressed.

What was it that he told them? He told them this: All strength is in ourselves and in Heaven there is no strength. No order, preordained, comes down to us from above. The spirit images reality and makes reality its own. To each he gave faith in himself. He even healed the sick by giving them faith in their healing, and that is a human miracle.

He was a breaker of idols. He shattered those abstract idols—dreams and vain repetitions. He even shattered the idol of God, which is of the same order, for all its vast dimensions.

And he also overthrew the fetishes of nationality and race. He thought and spoke for all men

throughout the World, and said to them: 'Your salvation will never come save through yourselves.' In this he was right, for sovereignty will issue from the masses when the strength and unity of the masses also issue forth from themselves and when the damned of this world shall lift their heads as one.

He glorified the equality of all men, saying, as if he had foreseen Lenin: 'Let the greatest among you be your servant.'

This eloquent preacher of justice was a thorn in the side of the Roman administrators, who were established then in Palestine as the English are now (and that is not the only point of comparison between the Romans of those times and the English of to-day). He was implicated in some supposed plot against the Roman State and though he was innocent of the charge, for he had done no plotting, he was condemned to death by the Romans. With the passing of years, many stories came to be told about his condemnation. It was said that the Jews had brought about his death. But here, the facts speak plainly to us. Rome alone had powers of life and death in Judæa. The Roman State, a great aristocratic institution, guardian of established order, like our 'democracies' of the present day, and like them, grandiloquent but hypocritical, shewed contemptuous tolerance towards harmless dreamers; but it was always merciless towards

troublers of the Established Order—which, viewed from within, is systematic thievery and viewed from without, systematic robbery with violence. The Jews could hate Jesus, and denounce him, but it was the established rule that put him to death.

When this man Jesus was fastened to the cross, when darkness came over him, and before his trans-fixed eyes he saw the wavering of the crowds whom he had wished to save—the crowds that had never understood him and knew not what they did—he must have thought that his work would die with him; nor was he wrong.

When all was over, darkness as of long night descended upon this defeated man. His name, too, seemed dead and no one remembered it. Had he a few disciples, who outlived him? Perhaps so. It has been said, but nothing is more doubtful. At all events, these personal disciples of his attracted little attention and were left undisturbed by the authorities—which speaks well for their prudence, and ill for their dignity.

Years passed—five, ten, twenty. . . . The children grew to manhood, young men were old men. And behold! in Asia, men went about preaching a new religion; and this was the watch-word given to the listening crowds: The Messiah has come. The watch-word was in this form: Christ is arisen. The preachers were Jews but not Jews of Palestine; they came from the Jewish colonies in the

Greek world and were attracted and influenced by pagan culture.

The religion which thus sprang into being had for its pivot a new God: the Christ, of whom there had been no question hitherto, and appropriated a vast new domain—the world beyond the tomb. It was the religion of death. Mankind, these reformers said, had been condemned to hard labour, to the pangs of childbirth, and to death, for the sins of the first man. But lo! the Son of God himself had come down to redeem mankind by his sacrifice; henceforth, a counter-destiny of light was instituted for believers—and for them only—after death, and gave them eternal life.

This operation of Redemption took place in regions beyond the stars. Christ the Saviour was a kind of celestial angelic meteor; in reality he was not even the Son of God, but an aspect of the one and only God, a flaming light that was part and parcel of supreme Glory.

This principle of light which—so the new pastors said—gave rise in Heaven and the regions above to the sublime annealing of death, simply and purely by transforming death into immortal life, now had nothing in common with the poor prophet who had foundered, long ere this, in Jerusalem; and with good reason no one, least of all the apostles, thought to associate them. It was indeed declared that Christ's redeeming sacrifice had come

through his suffering and even through his 'crucifixion.' But this suffering was wholly celestial and mystical, adapted from the Psalms and from Greek mythology. The apostles only knew their God through the ecstasy of revelation and the sudden grace flashed down upon them. This God was to them only a theological entity. It is true that he was also called Jesus. But Jesus means Saviour. And further, was the Galilean prophet called Jesus? We have been told so, but only at a much later date, for no one spoke of him in his own day.

The first generation of Christians lived and died, the founders of Christianity—Paul, Barnabas, Peter and the rest—also died, and still no human trait, no definite historic outline, had been assigned to the Messiah of Christians.

Long after, twenty years after the death of Paul (who remains to our belief, and until further information is forthcoming, the man who evolved Christianity from A to Z, drawing upon sources which we can trace and identify more and more precisely, and which are borrowed from local cults) the believers, now growing in numbers, and having now left behind their first mystic enthusiasm, asked for further information concerning this God who was said to have suffered as Man. What were his sufferings? Where had this all happened and how? When, and under what conditions, had God come down among men? "We see him with

the eyes of faith," they said, "but give us details!"

For these reasons and for others, the fathers of the Church had to comply and portray Christ in human guise. It was then, and then only, that they identified him with someone who had lived on earth. They chose one whose personality had dimmed and faded in the distance of years—half a century had now passed since the Galilean had been crucified by the Roman procurator—and they said: This was He.

If he had never existed, they would have invented him now, for it was necessary that Christ should have bodily incarnation. And if the man who had existed had not been called Jesus, that name henceforth would have been assigned to him.

A story was built round him which agreed in every way with the prophecies of the Old Testament: Jesus the Messiah, born of the Virgin Mary and of the Holy Ghost, of the line of David, was born at Bethlehem, lived at Nazareth, preached on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias, wrought unheard of miracles, was taken and put to death by the Pharisees and priests of Jerusalem, who forced Pontius Pilate's hand, arose on the third day and ascended into heaven. The books which recount this story are called the Gospels. The first appeared towards the end of the first century 'after Jesus Christ'; the last appeared, in the form that we now know it, towards the end of the second century.

By this semi-magical device, the Resurrection, the man Jesus was now for the first time assimilated to the divine Myth; he was decked out in superhuman qualities, clouded about with an afterglow of wonder, of ancient prophecy, new commandments. And a strange mixture it all made.

But stranger than all, this humble victim the preacher, who had been requisitioned like some beast of sacrifice to give up his body in martyrdom to the Doctrine of Redemption, to symbolize in the flesh this Agony of theologians, was great in himself, and his greatest is apparent in spite of all the religious paraphernalia heaped upon his head.

Echoing in the Gospels where Jesus is imprisoned and mutilated is something of the true voice of the true Jesus, some reverberation of his cry for justice and equality—that great cry of the Jew, calling on justice for a people enslaved, which he sent ringing out over the desert of upturned faces.

Thus the most extraordinary thing about this very true and simple story—the thing which evidence tells us more and more plainly, now that we can look the Scriptures squarely in the face—is that the real Jesus, Jesus the man, lives on among the tales invented by the gospel romancers. Looking down these pages with open mind, we still can find, can recognise certain human verities which

the inventors of a religion could never have invented.

This real Jesus, who eludes us in the realm of fact (except as the man condemned for fomenting political and social unrest), because we only have the scenario and the biased material of the stage-managers of religion, is revealed to us most directly in his thought, which could not be disguised as effectively as the events of his earthly life.

And after a careful study of the Gospels, it is even permissible to think that the actual teaching of this suppressed Galilean was to some extent known and utilised by the Christian reformers. But every one of them was a Judas; in the use they made of him, they became his betrayers. His living word, so vital and so pure, was used as the prop and mainstay of an artificial creed, so contrary to the profound teaching of Jesus that he is made to say the very opposite of what he said and thought. So this man who said that everything proceeds from ourselves was made to say that everything proceeds from God. And having taught that no interceder stands between man and the Infinite, that man's greatness proceeds and will proceed from man, that the social fabric cannot be built downwards from above any more than we start with the roof in a building of stone, he is made into the great Interceder for the human race.

It is no longer possible to say, then, that he had

been entirely forgotten in the interval of time, since the relics of his thought were unearthed and dressed up in this fashion. The man who said: Do not unto others what you would not have done unto yourselves, who only appealed to the profoundly vital and logical sentiment of fellowship and co-operation, was turned into the sentimental preacher of a kind of mild, utopian love.

And there was something finer and nobler yet than the way in which the true humanity of Jesus triumphantly emerges out of the lies and misunderstandings of Christian ritual—which was that the humanity of Jesus himself (thus exhumed and set up in the heart of this new mythology) was alone responsible for the extraordinary success of that religion.

This Man-God who worked with his hands, who suffered and was persecuted by the rich and priests, was loved by the people, and they took over this religion for themselves. The poor fostered it with their own flesh and blood. They never stopped to think that all this beauty was illusive, being built upon absurd foundations, for the same being cannot at once be god and man. A god who made himself man would be nothing more than a sham, and his human sufferings mere impostures. “Man only is human.” The people are single-minded, simple at heart; when, rightly or wrongly, they think that

they have found a figure or idea proportioned to themselves, they pour themselves, as it were into that vessel.

So when the Gospels had been written, the new religion was taken over by the afflicted, the disinherited upon earth. The peoples of the world succeeded in making Christianity a living, triumphant truth. It was a mass and class movement. And thus Christianity was able to conquer ground in spite of its flaws and contradictions, in spite of the iniquity of its fundamental tenets.

But when the Church stepped into power, thanks to the masses, it denied and rejected them. It became a reactionary power in the State, and only stepped into the shoes of the Roman Empire by imitating it slavishly. The true Jesus and those who resembled him became as strangers. For every believer, the bloodstained history of the Church is an outrage.

And now, in our times, the same vast tragedy is being enacted once again. There is a world-wide upheaval, a movement towards a new organisation of society. This movement is directed against the powerful mechanism of Established Order, against the voracity and cruelty of a Civilisation which is tottering, giving signs of decline and decay like those apparent in the ancient world of that day. This movement is in the hands of the sweated and

the oppressed. It will triumph under the sign of the hammer and sickle, as that other triumphed under the sign of the cross.

But, unlike the great Christian creed, it does not contain the germs of decay and death. It is not built upon dreams, on the supernatural, on clouds and on death; but on reason and on life, on laws which are as clear and unshaken as the laws which order the forces of nature herself.

This time, therefore, in all human likelihood, it will succeed—not merely triumph for a day, but stand for all future time in the place of the tenacious, oppressive rule of a parasitic order and its inseparable accomplice, the Church.

THE PIT HORSE

YOU are leaving the surface of the earth. Above, you had seen everything bathed in the light of the sky; the pavements in the little town shone like golden fruits. Before her door, the housewife gave her doormat a drubbing. Through the wide open door came a warm murmuring: over the dark stove, spangled with red lines and circles, French beans were dancing in the boiling pot. The two hands of the old woman at her knitting shaped a cup. There were bands of children, many-hued; their voices also ranged through all kinds of colours.

Now that you are down the mineshaft and have left the world above, look at your guide.

‘I can’t see a thing.’

‘Wait. You’ll get used to it.’

There’s a nasty smell. Our noses take us towards it. A great black mess lies there. A coal wagon? No, it’s warm. It is—it is . . . something that would look like a horse, if one could but see it, a living horse, a horse of flesh and blood.

‘He has no name, of course. Too dark for that. Strike a light. Hallo! did you see the rats escaping

'from that pot where the horse's food is put? He never eats it; much too filthy.'

'How does he live, then?'

'Well, he doesn't speak, so we can't say.'

The horse is lying on the wagon rails, and the rail runs over a swamp and the water comes oozing and squirting up through the planks underneath, when your foot presses on them.

'His hooves are rotting. They call this disease the rot or the "toad." His hooves indeed look very like toads. Hard work and disease have done for his teeth, his eyes, for his hide too, nearly. He has become one with the mud, the last home of all things.'

'His work is to go up and down the tunnel, dragging the loaded wagons. He would not stir unless compelled to: too tired. The long effort of his working life weighs upon him, breaks him.'

'To keep him at it they open his cadaverous, pendulous jaw. They tie a string round his tongue and pull on that. He is used to pain, but feeling the tug on the roots of his tongue, he plods on, for all the scraping of ceiling and wall on his raw flesh. There is one place where the tunnel is so low that he has to go down on his haunches and crawl along like that. They beat him.'

'Who do that?'

'Men do.'

'The bare places on him are more plentiful than

the hide, and at every joint a furrow, a hole or hollow marks a sore. If there were light to see, he'd show his red, red heart, just as the false god in churches shows us his painted heart. But there's no light. Up top, on the floor of the world, there is joy in the blessed rain, the wind, the fresh air, the breath of water and the feel of the sun. Even cold is to some extent a delightful sensation. Down below, where your grave shall be, there are the worms at your door—and the old horse.'

'But this is frightful.'

'As you put it, and so nicely. But what's more frightful is to think that there are masses of these horses underground: ten thousand in France. Don't let us be too sweeping; it's foolish to go in for generalisations and use the word "all," because then they shut you up with a single exception. But among this ten thousand, these looming phantoms of the infernal regions, how many can we count who haven't the strength to fight a rat, or who have one eye swinging loose, or both eyes put out, or rotting feet, or flanks slit open like some mother of sorrows? How many who cry out in their pain? It's a rare thing, a horse that screams. But you hear that down here.'

'But this horse isn't working at the moment.'

'That's because we're here; and so he's tumbled down to rest. But he does a twenty-four hour day.'

'Twenty-four hours in the twenty-four?'

'Neither more nor less; the three shifts of miners use the same animals in turn. They grind these flesh-machines till they drop, cutting out all waste in sleep. They don't last quite as long, still it's the system which brings in best profits to the contractor.'

'But if horses didn't do the work, men would have to.'

'Work should not mean torture for anyone.'

'So a horse is "someone"?"

'Yes. I pity horses just as much as men. Oh! don't raise your hands in astonishment, I beg you. What I have just said was said instinctively, a cry from the heart. But I can give reasons for it, for I belong to that plain rough school which does explain such cries, just as it explains dreams.'

'I have long noticed that when I see a blind man and his dog I feel just as sorry for the dog as for the blind man. And if I dared speak out my mind I should say that I felt sorrier for the animal than for the man.'

'There's a reason for that, especially for us fellows who build upon reason. Here it is: Man sometimes is buoyed up and inspired by visions. When the believer suffers pain, he says: "It's all to the good." When he dies, he sighs: "At last!" Or he is sustained, as we are, by confidence in the future, and he knows, when he is suffering, that sometimes suffering can cease. Our martyrs and our tortured of

to-day are sustained, not by the symbolism of a cross, but by the very frame and ordering of things; they know that they are painfully at one with the realities of life. And there are other times when man is sustained by alcohol.

'Further, it must be said that if we men suffer, it is nearly always our own fault. It's because we allow ourselves to be imposed upon by laws or ideas, by the crimes we commit or allow to be committed. But animals have neither knowledge nor belief. They can't act of themselves; they are therefore the true innocents. They suffer because of men. They have nothing to do with their suffering, but you and I have. Now that is the suffering I cannot bear.

'For animals suffer just as much as men. When it comes to cries, or bleeding, or dying, we creatures are all one. The machine that suffers is made of bones, flesh, nerves and brain. And if animals are humble and backward creatures, instead of being capitalists of the intellect, that doesn't make it less true that they're fitted with the same cog-wheels inside to catch up misery and pain. Besides that, men's instincts and feelings, disturbing though they may be, are quintessentialised, microscopically analysed (read our young novelists of to-day) compounded of unknown elements, ill defined, dangerous, contaminated by that disease of civilisation which we call "complications." But those of ani-

mals—even their egoism—are pure and impecable. Our eyes—crystal witcheries; their eyes, rough diamonds, poor in subtleties, rich in transparency. But a truce to those disquisitions on eyes; a creature lies here that has neither light nor eyes. Let us sum up and say: life is greater than all else; knowledge, and intellectual inquiry, and great masterpieces and psychology and super-psychology are little things beside Life itself. Life cannot be abstracted from the ability to suffer and the right not to suffer at all; in this vast field, the emancipation of the one cannot be considered apart from emancipation of the other. This business about horses is man's business; and if horses are not organised in their own interests, we are, on their behalf. Peoples of all countries—even of lower race—unite! And so true is this that instead of going up top among the refined, the wise and the happy, and the so-called *élite* who have helped since the beginning of time to crush the armies of the humble and lowly, I would rather stay down here a little beside this flayed morsel of life.'

‘Everything obeys positive laws, and not sentiments.’

‘Stay, comrade! I agree with you there, but sentiment is not a cause; it is an effect. Here, it finds inward expression. The anomaly works out in our natures in the shape of revolt and anger and loving-kindness. And the anomaly means the twist given to

that great sovereign law which forbids us to enslave others, ordains us to respect life.

'I regard this suffering beast as I regard the red flag.

'In old times, men solemnly sacrificed the Scapegoat. The sins of a people were unloaded on the head of a beast that was doomed to execration and death. My mind has always been haunted with the idea that that Scapegoat was innocent. Let there be no blinking of eyes; we are not nearly so free of that scandalous old myth as we think. And nothing will ever be achieved so long as the conscience of slaves is only just wide enough awake to let them avenge their wrongs on the heads of other sufferers.'

August, 1927.

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